



STATE OF INDIANA

Request for Information 18-028

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

On Behalf Of

Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS)

Solicitation For:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE-ETS) for students with disabilities in need of services who are eligible or potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services

Response Due Date: November 21, 2017 @ 3:00 PM EST

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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION 18-028

I. INTRODUCTION

This is a Request for Information (RFI) issued by the Indiana Department of Administration (IDOA) in conjunction with the Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS); Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). This RFI requests responses from organizations for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as described in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to students with disabilities between the ages of 14-22 years of age who are eligible or potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. The responses to this RFI will provide BRS with insight into the available resources and expertise for the provision of high-quality Pre-ETS and the capacity of Indiana educational institutions, state agencies, and other organizations to partner with BRS in meeting specific WIOA requirements. It is the intent of IDOA to solicit proposals, and possibly demonstrations of these services and to negotiate and award contract(s) in accordance with the descriptions outlined in this document. Neither this RFI nor any proposal submitted or demonstration performed is to be construed as a legal offer. The State of Indiana is not liable for any cost incurred by the vendor in response to this RFI.

II. PURPOSE OF THE RFI

DDRS/BRS is required to spend 15% of federal VR grant funds on the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities, in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA.

The purpose of this RFI is to gain information about existing practices and strategies that could be enhanced or expanded to align with Pre-ETS, and new strategies that could be implemented to carry out Pre-ETS for participants who are students with disabilities, as defined below, who are enrolled in school and are, or may be, eligible to receive VR services. Respondents will be asked to provide information regarding their experience providing transition activities or other similar services and their plans for performing services in Indiana, or enhancing or expanding services to increase participation of students with disabilities. Further, respondents will be asked to provide business and pricing information for the services described herein. Specifically, DDRS is interested in identifying existing practices or new strategies from community partners in counties listed in **Attachment B, Priority Counties**.

The State reserves the right to award multiple contracts to qualified organizations, and/or to establish 'Third Party Cooperative Arrangements' with state or local public agencies (e.g., Local Education Agencies, public universities, State agencies), and/or enter into Interagency Agreements with State agencies directly as a result of this RFI, based on respondent specialization and alignment with the scope of this RFI. If private entities respond the State will enter into a contract, see Attachment I for a sample contract and The State also reserves the right to award contracts for a portion of the Respondent's proposed scope and/or cost as outlined in the RFI response and cost proposal. If the State exercises this right, the State will award a contract to the Respondent(s) whose proposal, conforming to this RFI, is most advantageous to the State, price and other factors considered. Please note that while not required, special consideration will be given to those proposals that demonstrate the ability and willingness to enter into a Third Party Cooperative Arrangement or interagency agreement as described in **Attachment C**. DDRS may also utilize information obtained through this RFI to develop further solicitation, such as a Request for Proposal.

III. SUMMARY SCOPE OF WORK

The VR program is part of the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS), Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). The specific mission of the VR program is to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, maintain, or regain competitive, integrated employment. Qualified VR staff and VR employment service providers work together to assist eligible VR individuals to: identify appropriate employment goals consistent with each individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice; obtain individualized employment outcomes; and retain employment outcomes.

DDRS/BRS is seeking information regarding available resources and expertise for the provision of Pre-ETS. Collaboration among state agencies, local public agencies, Work One centers, area employment providers, secondary

and/or post-secondary educational institutions, Independent Living centers, community programs, and/or, other entities, is of particular interest to BRS in the provision of these services. Collaboration among entities is strongly encouraged to better coordinate service delivery, reduce duplication of effort, and serve the greatest number of students possible. Entities offering services within counties where Pre-ETS are not currently provided will be given priority. These priority counties can be found in **Attachment B**.

Provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services

Required Pre-ETS activities include the following under Section 113(b) of the Rehabilitation Act:

- (1) job exploration counseling;
- (2) work-based learning experiences;
- (3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- (4) workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- (5) instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

Collaboration among partners is strongly encouraged, and a list of collaborating partners, along with subject matter expertise, should be included with the proposal. BRS reserves the right to encourage collaboration among entities during the review phase of the RFI.

The following provides additional details related to the above required activities:

1. Job exploration counseling: this may include, but is not limited to, interest and ability surveys, reviewing career websites, high school based courses on career choices, or other similar activities.
2. Work-based learning experiences: this may include, but is not limited to, paid or non-paid work experiences in the community, volunteer work, job shadows, short or long-term internships, on the job training, apprenticeships (not including pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships) and employer mentoring activities. Work-based learning activities should be conducted in competitive, integrated employment settings to the maximum extent possible.
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary education: this may include, but is not limited to, exploration of the wide range of career pathways (e.g., agriculture, manufacturing, etc.), counseling on postsecondary training opportunities including community colleges, universities, trade/technical schools, etc., and counseling to support a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary education (e.g., documenting and advocating for accommodations, identifying financial aid options, etc.).
4. Workplace readiness: this may include, but is not limited to, soft-skills training, employability skills training, social/interpersonal skills (e.g., communication, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, empathy, professionalism, etc.) and independent living skills training (e.g., good hygiene, money management, using transportation, time management, using technology and assistive technology, appropriate dress, appropriate behavior, etc.).
5. Instruction in self-advocacy: this may include, but is not limited to, instruction in self-awareness, disability disclosure, requesting accommodations, understanding rights and responsibilities, self-determination, etc., and mentoring including peer mentoring.

WIOA mandates that Pre-ETS be specifically provided (and therefore only provided) to “students with disabilities.” A “student with a disability” is defined as students in secondary school between the ages of 14 through the school year in which the student becomes 22, who are eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or is an individual with a disability for purposes of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Responses should describe specific strategies for developing and carrying out Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, as aligned with the WIOA required activities described above. It is anticipated that Pre-ETS will be carried out in individual or group settings through the following broad strategies:

- one-on-one interactions with students for the provision of job exploration counseling, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self advocacy;
- development and implementation of curriculum to groups of students with a focus on job exploration counseling, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self advocacy. Examples of specific curriculum topics may include the presentation of general local labor market composition and information, administration of vocational interest inventories, instruction regarding self-advocacy and self-determination, or other topics that are general in nature and are not typically customized to an individual student's disability-related or vocational needs; or
- student participation in a variety of work-based learning experiences to apply curriculum-based learning and as appropriate, gain work skills. Collaboration with local businesses is necessary to ensure that work-based learning experiences are provided in competitive, integrated settings.

It is important to note that if a student with a disability requires services that are beyond the limited scope of Pre-ETS, the student would have to apply for and be determined eligible for VR services and develop an individualized plan for employment for the receipt of those services as would be true for any other applicant.

Additionally, responses should describe the nature and extent of collaborative partnerships with other state agencies, local public agencies, Work One centers, area employment providers, secondary and/or post-secondary educational institutions, Independent Living centers, community programs, and/or, other entities and other applicable partners. Although collaboration is not required, DDRS feels that collaboration will ensure increased capacity and reduced duplication in the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities across the state. If respondent will collaborate with applicable partners then responses should include, at minimum, the following details:

- Identified partners in carrying out Pre-ETS to students with disabilities;
- Geographic area (i.e. counties, school districts), including specific schools that respondent and each collaborative partner will serve;
- Roles and responsibilities of each collaborative partner; and
- Strategies for improving collaboration to increase access to Pre-ETS for students with disabilities, and minimize duplication of services by multiple organizations.

Should contracts be awarded they will be established as 'fee-for-service' contracts. Responses should outline fees for the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. This may include fees for one-on-one delivery of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, and fees for provision of Pre-ETS to students within a group setting. BRS may negotiate fees based on review of proposed fees by all respondents to ensure an equitable reimbursement rate. Respondents must complete **Attachment A, Cost Proposal**.

Responses should briefly describe how proposed strategies assist in meeting the following goals:

- Documented progress and outcomes for participants, including an increase/improvement in demonstrated skills;
- Exploration of a wide range of career options, including certification programs, apprenticeships, trade/technical programs, and other career pathways;
- Exploration and, as applicable, participation in career and technical education opportunities; and
- Development of purposeful transition goals to address student needs.

IV. RESPONSE FORMAT AND ATTACHMENTS

The State requests written proposals from vendors that can meet the scope of work outlined in section III. Scope of Work, particularly entities that can provide Pre-ETS in counties listed in **Attachment B**.

In addition to providing requested information outlined in Section III. Scope of Work, respondent must address each of the following items.

1. Provide an overview of how the proposed strategies meet the requirements for Pre-ETS as outlined in the scope of work. Describe in detail the specific strategies for developing and carrying out each of the (up to) five Pre-ETS activities described in Section III. Summary Scope of Work, to students with disabilities, as aligned with WIOA required activities, for both individuals and/or in group settings. As applicable, describe how the proposed strategies enhance or expand upon existing strategies that have been successful in the provision of services that align with Pre-ETS to students with disabilities or other student populations. Identify the specific counties and schools respondent intends to serve.
2. Additionally, please provide a detailed description of your work approach, including the following:
 - How would you organize this project in order to be able to manage the workload?
 - Provide a high-level project plan, based on the information provided in this RFI.
 - Describe how you would staff this project to ensure capacity to carry out the scope of work. Identify key staff and their roles and responsibilities, including roles and responsibilities of any collaborative partner organizations. Ensure that the staffing plan is consistent with cost proposal.
 - Describe how you would evaluate the effectiveness of services provided.
 - Describe procedures related to how data and required documentation listed in attachment D would be collected and entered into BRS' Pre-ETS web portal (see **Attachment E, Overview of Web Portal**).
3. Describe relevant experience and qualifications in the provision of transition services to students with disabilities or other student populations that align with the Pre-ETS activities described in this RFI. Responses must also include background and expertise of staff who would play a substantial role in the delivery of services. Experience and qualifications for both respondent as well as any partner organizations, as applicable, must be included in the response. Provide resumes for key staff.
4. Please outline strategies for leveraging resources and partners to ensure the most cost effective approach for the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.
5. If applicable, describe how your agency meets the guidelines for entering into a Third Party Cooperative Arrangement, or an Interagency Agreement, and your ability to provide non-federal matching funds of at least 21.3% for the provision of Pre-ETS.

BRS is seeking innovative, collaborative, non-duplicative strategies for the provision of Pre-ETS, and intends to ensure Pre-ETS are available statewide to every student with a disability, as defined in section III. Scope of Work, who requires Pre-ETS. BRS is also interested in responses from state or public agencies interested in potential collaboration for the provision of Pre-ETS through a Third Party Cooperative Agreement (state or local public agency only) or Interagency Transfer (state agency only).

The following attachments are included with this RFI, and must be incorporated into your response as applicable. All Respondents must complete **Attachment A (Cost Proposal Response Template)** and include a signed Transmittal Letter.

Attachments	Description
Attachment A	Cost Proposal
Attachment B	Priority Counties
Attachment C	Description of Third Party Cooperative Arrangement (TPCA) and Interagency Transfer Agreements
Attachment D	Required Data and Documentation

Attachment E	Business Proposal Template
Attachment F	Technical Proposal Template
Attachment G	Question and Answer Template
Attachment H	Overview of BRS' Pre-ETS Web Portal

Proposal must be submitted in the original format. Any attempt to manipulate the format of the Cost Proposal document, attach caveats to pricing, or submit pricing that deviates from the current format will put your proposal at risk.

VI. RESPONSE SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Vendors interested in providing information to IDOA and FSSA should submit responses via email to Teresa Deaton-Reese of the Indiana Department of Administration at tdeaton@idoa.IN.gov.

All proposals must be received no later than **3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on November 21, 2017**. The subject line of the email submission must clearly state the following:

"REQUEST FOR INFORMATION 18-028"

Question/Inquiry Process: All questions/inquiries regarding this RFI must be submitted in writing by the deadline of **3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on November 6, 2017 on Attachment H**. Questions/Inquiries may be submitted via email to tdeaton@idoa.in.gov and must be received by Procurement Division by the time and date indicated above.

The Procurement Division personnel will compile a list of the questions/inquiries submitted by all respondents. The responses will be posted to the IDOA website by November 9, 2017, however this date is subject to change based on the volume of questions received. Only answers posted on the IDOA website will be considered official and valid by the State. No respondent shall rely upon, take any action, or make any decision based upon any verbal communication with any State employees.

Please note that Teresa Deaton-Reese of IDOA is the State's single point of contact for this RFI. **Inquiries are not to be directed to any staff member of FSSA.** Such action may disqualify respondent from further consideration for a contract resulting from this RFI.

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFI, or if additional information is necessary for a clearer interpretation of provisions of this RFI prior to the due date for submissions, an addendum will be posted on the IDOA website.

Pricing: Pricing on this RFI must be firm and remain open for a period of not less than 180 days from the submission due date.

Please provide your pricing proposal by populating the Cost Proposal (Attachment A). Submit Attachment A in Microsoft Excel format.

Clarifications and Discussions: The State reserves the right to request clarifications on information submitted to the State. The State also reserves the right to conduct discussions, either oral or written, with respondents. These discussions could include demonstrations of proposed strategies, requests for additional information, requests for cost or technical proposal revision, etc. Additionally, in conducting discussions, the State may use information derived from proposals submitted by competing respondents only if the identity of the Respondent providing the information is not disclosed to others. Discussions, along with negotiations with respondents may be conducted for any appropriate purpose.

The Procurement Division will schedule all discussions. Any information gathered through oral discussions must be

confirmed in writing.

The State may request best and final offers from those respondents determined by the State to be reasonably viable for contract award. However, the State reserves the right to award a contract(s) on the basis of initial proposals received. Therefore, each proposal should contain the respondent's best terms from a price and technical standpoint.

Following evaluation of the best and final offers, the State may select for final contract negotiations/execution the offers that are most advantageous, considering cost and the evaluation criteria in this RFI.

Key Dates: The following timeline is only an illustration of this RFI process. The dates associated with each step are not to be considered binding. These dates are commonly subject to change.

Anticipated RFI Dates:

Activity	Date
Issue of RFI	October 23, 2017
Deadline to Submit Written Questions (3pm Eastern Time)	November 6,, 2017
Final response to Written Questions/RFI Amendments	November 9, 2017
Due Date for Submissions	November 21, 2017
<i>The dates for the following activities are target dates only. These activities may be completed earlier or later than the date shown.</i>	
Oral Presentations/Demonstrations (If invited)	TBD
Contract Award (If awarded)	January 1, 2018

VII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

RFI submissions will be evaluated by the State, and the State reserves the right to award a contract(s) directly based on responses to this RFI. However, the State does not guarantee that a contract(s) will result directly from this RFI. Proposals will be evaluated based upon the proven ability of the respondent to satisfy the requirements of the RFI in a cost-effective manner. Each of the evaluation criteria categories is described below with a brief explanation of the basis for evaluation in that category. The points associated with each category are indicated following the category name (total maximum points = 100). If any one or more of the listed criteria on which the responses to this RFI will be evaluated are found to be inconsistent or incompatible with applicable federal laws, regulations or policies, the specific criterion or criteria will be disregarded and the responses will be evaluated and scored without taking into account such criterion or criteria.

Summary of Evaluation Criteria:

Criteria	Points
1. Adherence to Mandatory Requirements	Pass/Fail
2. Management Assessment/Quality (Business and Technical Proposal)	75 points
3. Pricing (Cost Proposal)	25 points

Step 1

In this step proposals will be evaluated only against Criteria 1 to ensure that they adhere to Mandatory Requirements. Any proposals not meeting the Mandatory Requirements will be disqualified.

Step 2

The proposals that meet the Mandatory Requirements will then be scored based on Criteria 2 and 3 ONLY. This scoring will have a maximum possible score of 100 points. All proposals will be ranked on the basis of their combined scores for Criteria 2 and 3 ONLY. This ranking may be used to create a "short list". Any proposal not making the "short list" will not be considered for any further evaluation.

Step 2 may include one or more rounds of proposal discussions (oral and/or written) focused on cost and other proposal elements.

Note on Oral Presentations: Proposal discussions may include oral presentations if the State deems it necessary and the Vendor is invited by the State. Oral presentations will be held at the Indiana Government Center South at 402 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN.

Step 3

If the State conducts additional rounds of discussions and a BAFO round which lead to changes in either the technical or cost proposal for the short listed Respondents, their scores will be recomputed.

The section below describes the different evaluation criteria.

Adherence to Requirements – Pass/Fail

Respondents passing this category move to Step 2 and proposal is evaluated for Management Assessment/Quality and Cost.

Management Assessment/Quality - 75 points

Proposals will be evaluated for overall Management Assessment/Quality, including responses to requirements in Section IV of this RFI.

Pricing – 25 points

Cost scores will then be normalized to one another, based on the lowest average unit rate evaluated. The lowest average unit rate receives a total of 25 points. The normalization formula is as follows:

- *Respondent's Cost Score = (Lowest Average Unit Rate / Total Cost of Proposal) X 25*

3.2.4 Indiana Economic Impact (5 points)

The Commissioner of IDOA or their designee will, in the exercise of their sole discretion, determine which proposal(s) offer the best means of servicing the interests of the State. The exercise of this discretion will be final.

Any requests received after the due date and time will not be considered. The State will reach out to selected vendors to schedule demonstrations if needed. All demonstrations shall take place at the Indiana Government Center at 402 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN, 46204.

Information submitted or presented to State will be considered public information once contracts have been fully executed.