



January 17, 2024

Teresa Deaton-Reese, CPPO – RFS-24-77904
Indiana Department of Administration
Procurement Division
402 West Washington Street, Room W468
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Request for Services #: 24-77904

Subject: WIOA Pre-ETS for Students with Disabilities in Need of Services who are Eligible or Potentially Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Dear Ms. Deaton-Reese:

Prairie Quest Inc. (dba PQC) hereby submits our response to Request for Services #24-77904, Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). As part of this executive summary letter, and in support of our proposal, please find the following:

1. Summary of Ability & Desire to Supply Required Services or Products

Prairie Quest Inc. (PQC) and our training-focused division, PQC Trains, bring over a decade of experience in developing, implementing and running training programs, including with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) in Indiana. PQC Trains exists to provide employment services to students and adults with disabilities in order to help them find successful, long-term employment. This means going beyond simple employment training, and PQC Trains empowers our clients of all ages to learn practical job skills in order to find employment positions that are fulfilling and meaningful so that they can be successful at work and beyond.

In 2018, when we first became a Pre-ETS provider, PQC Trains supported only five (5) schools in two (2) counties. This small start gave us time to work on our performance and find ways to maximize our operations and solutions. In 2020, we increased that service to 40 schools in 13 counties. In total, we have served 1,567 students across 40 schools in 13 counties since we first began providing services. Our dedicated and knowledgeable Job Coaches work one-on-one and in groups with our students to help them cultivate skills and explore paths toward their futures; we are proud to have conducted 57,238 sessions thus far focused on helping our students develop in the Pre-ETS core activities—job exploration, self-advocacy, workplace readiness, postsecondary, and work-based learning. Based on data provided by the state Pre-ETS leadership, in 2023, PQC Trains provided 17% of the total overall Pre-ETS sessions (all five categories) and 21% of the Workplace Readiness-specific sessions. Additionally, PQC Trains supported 14% of the state total stipends.

As a Pre-ETS provider, we focus on inclusion-backed care and knowledge, and we believe in the human connection. Through equality, honesty, as well as dependable and empowerment-focused services, we can change the circumstances for the betterment of us all. We provide our students with one-on-one coaching or workshop-based training focused on developing life and work skills aligned with the Pre-ETS core activities. For our team, our challenge has been to show the value that Pre-ETS brings to each and every school. With 80% of our schools being rural, the options for post-high school jobs are somewhat limited. We have not let this be a holdout. Along with providing our students with a good foundation of the five (5) basics, we have also created work experience options in the form of quality work-based learning as well as brought together community resources through the five (5) transition fairs that PQC Trains organized and hosted. We know we must overcome prior history and opinion to partner with our schools. In some cases, we have been very successful. For example, in 2020, when speaking with Principal Dodd of Wes-Del High, he wasn't interested in our Pre-ETS programming. Within a year, we had not only changed that, but worked with the school to create a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program specific to students wishing to



join the digital workspace through storytelling and animation. We have repeated this commitment to every school we have worked.

We also know that in order to provide quality services, we must employ quality personnel. Ms. Paige Briggs, the PQC Trains Program Manager, comes with a depth of experience in team management and employment training experience. Ms. Briggs works closely to select Job Coaches specifically to support schools. We work hard to find team members that have a connection to the community and school. PQC Trains provides Pre-ETS within the school environment, and our preferred plan is one-on-one with students. To prepare our Job Coaches, we invest over 160 hours of training for each team member. Our mandatory 80-hour initial training includes comprehensive instruction related to working in the schools and gaining the trust of our teacher of record, school administrators, parents and—most importantly—the student. We require our Job Coaches to take the VR 101 course so they understand the activities of transition and long-term support. Each new Job Coach is also given time to job shadow our other Job Coaches in order to experience how Pre-ETS fits into the school environment.

PQC Trains is committed to providing person-centric training. Our approach is to follow the tenets of the LifeCourse framework; and we are committed to training that is focused on the person, works with the family, and assists with lifetime plans. Our Unique Learning System (ULS) and internal training are designed to be deployed one student at a time. When we do have group sessions, it is for training that allows them to work and learn as a team. PQC utilizes the very popular Padlet as a launching pad to materials specific to the Job Coach as well as the student. In 2021, PQC worked closely with the Department of Education to learn about Indiana Career Connect, and we have continued to help students and teachers navigate the excellent resources within the tool. In 2023, PQC Trains leadership rolled out Padlet materials specific to the five (5) Pre-ETS categories as well as community resources (aka neighborhood mapping) and tools assessments, skills training, and state and local resources. Our Job Coaches have access to pre-and post-rubrics, evaluation tools, and key employment tools such as a job-specific résumé, cover letter, career assessments, and a community resource list. Additionally, for students that would benefit from ongoing VR support, there is an informational letter to the family, a guide to services, as well as forms and location information. PQC Trains does not want students to leave high school under prepared for the future.

Upon review of our proposal, we are hopeful you will see the commitment to the quality services we have and will continue to provide. We believe we have presented the case for our exceptional leadership and staffing, our knowledge of Pre-ETS, our curriculum and additional lessons created to be person centric, and all the resources and community connections we've built. Much like in 2020, we have reached big to add more counties and schools. Over the past five (5) years, we have been approached many times by schools that want us to be their provider. They have heard about our staff, our materials, and our commitment to provide services to our rural and urban schools. We've worked hard to create working relationships with our state Pre-ETS representatives, learning from them on how to improve our services. We have also been a part of the VR Commission, which works to ensure effectiveness and customer satisfaction. We know that the Pre-ETS program is evolving and growing in its impact to state employment for those with disabilities. We want to evolve with it.

With the submission of this proposal, we seek to continue providing Pre-ETS for eligible students as well expanding our services to support more students across the northern Indiana region with a dedicated focus on underserved counties or in areas not currently being served by any provider.

2. Authorized Representative

PQC's principal contact and authorized signatory is Ms. Stacey E. Smith, our President/CEO and the Executive Program Manager for our PQC Trains division. Her signature certifying the accuracy of proposal is included at the conclusion of this document. Her contact information is as follows:



Stacey E. Smith
PQC / PQC Trains
4211 Hobson Court, Suite A
Fort Wayne, IN 46815
260-420-7374
stacey@pqcworks.com

3. Respondent Notification

PQC agrees to email notification.

4. Secretary of State

PQC has an active business status with the Indiana Secretary of State.

5. Mandatory Requirements

PQC affirms our proposal meets the Mandatory Requirements identified in RFS section 3.2.

6. Other Information

Along with supporting the Pre-ETS program, PQC Trains is also a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) in all the regions proposed. By being a CRP for Indiana VR as well as a BDDS provider and an Employment Network (EN) to the Social Security Administration, we provide multiple options for students after high school. We believe that this allows us to minimize students that will need support and services after transitioning out of high schools.

If you should have any questions, please contact Ms. Stacey Smith at Stacey@PQCworks.com.

Sincerely,

Stacey E. Smith
President/CEO
Prairie Quest Inc.



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