



NEW MEXICO DIVISION OF
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**Request for Informal Proposals
Pre-Employment Transition Services
Ongoing**

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR or Division) is requesting informal proposals from qualified firms or Offerors for the purpose of hiring a Contractor(s) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services. The Contractor(s) shall support NMDVR in the implementation of the Rehabilitation Act 1973 as amended by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), by providing Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for New Mexico students with disabilities (SWD) ages 14 through 21 in need of such services.

The selected Contractor(s) shall coordinate and deliver Pre-ETS services within the state of New Mexico to all eligible and potentially eligible SWD. The purpose is to provide students with disabilities customized, integrated support and community resources specially tailored to the needs of transition aged SWD, as measured by an increase in the number of students prepared for college and career placement.

These methods of coordination and delivery shall increase the number of potential SWD to receive the following five required Pre-ETS activities as defined in 34 C.F.R. §361.5(c)(5) to include: (1) job exploration counseling, (2) instruction in self-advocacy (may include peer mentoring), (3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, (4) workplace readiness training, and (5) work-based learning experiences.

Below are narratives describing Pre-ETS curriculum:

A. Job Exploration Counseling

Job Exploration Counseling, or career counseling, can include a wide variety of professional activities which help individuals with career-related issues. Career counseling is also offered in various settings, including in groups and individually, in person or virtually. Discussion or counseling of job exploring options are intended to foster motivation, consideration of opportunities and informed decision-making. Specific to youth, real-world activities ensure that students recognize the relevance of a high school and post-school education to their futures, both in college and/or the workplace. Job exploration counseling activities can be done in conjunction with private, for-profit, public or nonprofit businesses in your community and/or through web-based resources.

B. Work Based and Learning Experiences (WBLEs)

WBLE is an educational approach or instructional methodology that uses the workplace, or real work experiences, to provide SWD with the knowledge and skills that will help them connect school experiences to real-life work activities and future career opportunities. WBLEs are provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible and may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experiences outside the traditional school setting (including internships). It is essential that direct employer or community involvement be a component of the WBLE to ensure in-depth student engagement. These opportunities are meant to engage, motivate, and augment the learning process.

These WBLE opportunities can be done in conjunction with private, for-profit, public, or nonprofit businesses in a student's community and/or through web-based resources. In addition, work-based learning requires in-depth engagement of youth and an evaluation of acquired work relevant skills.

C. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs

Maximum flexibility in the career decision making process is important in the early phases of Post-Secondary Education (PSE) planning. This includes gaining an awareness of the wide range of career pathway options and labor market realities and projections. Choosing a career requires student exploration and planning. It is important that students connect the present to the future. It is essential for them to see how skill development and knowledge relate to future opportunities in Post-Secondary Education (PSE) settings and employment. Individualized student strategies to support a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary education (PSE).

D. Workplace Readiness Training (to develop social skills and independent living)

Workplace readiness traits describe a number of commonly expected skills that employers seek from most employees. Work readiness skills are a set of skills and behaviors that are necessary for any job. Work readiness skills are sometimes called soft skills, employability skills, or job readiness skills.

E. Instruction in Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert his/her own interests and/or desires. Self-determination means that individuals with disabilities have the freedom to plan their own lives, pursue the things that are important to them and to experience the same life opportunities as other people in their communities. It means taking the responsibility for communicating one's needs and desires in a straightforward manner to others. The development of self-advocacy skills should be started at an early age. These skills will be needed in education, workplace, and community settings.

F. Pre-employment Transition Coordination

Pre-Employment Transition Coordination is defined in 34 CFR § 361.48(a)(4) and includes the following activities: (1) attending individualized education program meetings for students with disabilities, when invited; (2) working with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships, summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships; (3) Working with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614(d) of the IDEA, to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services; (4) when invited, attending person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

II. SCOPE OF WORK/DELIVERABLES/MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

A. Scope of Work

The Contractor shall:

1. Provide year round Pre-ETS required activities for students with disabilities, ages 14 through 21, in the areas of Job Exploration Counseling, Work Based Learning, Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Postsecondary Educational Programs at Institutions of Higher Education, Self -Advocacy, and Workplace Readiness Training (see curriculum below).
2. Support NMDVR to meet compliance with Sec. 113 of the WIOA by increasing the number of special education students served in NM and increasing the NMDVR's ability to provide Pre-ETS to students between the ages of 14-21.
3. Ensure the services meet the measurable outcomes and objectives.
4. Work with the NMDVR staff as needed and communicate regularly, at least monthly, with NMDVR Transition Coordinator and NMDVR counselors.
5. Meet with NMDVR staff on a quarterly basis to review Contractor's performance.
6. Provide Pre-employment Transition Services for eligible and potentially eligible SWD.
7. Create student schedules and work assignments for each Pre-ETS activity. Work with each student to create a personalized plan identifying their goals and progress related to employability and independent living skills, with special emphasis on "work place readiness skills".
8. Contractor shall ensure that students maintain timesheets and leave requests.
9. Maintain work logs showing who will be providing Pre-ETS as identified in this Scope of Work.
10. Contractor shall enter Pre-employment transition service data elements into the NMDVR SharePoint portal, to include but not be limited to:
 - a. Number of students served
 - b. Unique Identifier
 - c. Date of Birth
 - d. Race
 - e. Ethnicity
 - f. Start date of transition services
 - g. Type of pre-ETS service received

NMDVR will train Contractors on utilizing the portal. Contractor shall receive the Pre-ETS Application URL from NMDVR Information Technology Unit upon contract implementation. Data shall be entered by the 7th day following the end of each month.

11. Coordinate transportation for students as needed.
12. Monitor student placements and assist as needed.
13. Work with NMDVR to handle project issues as they arise.
14. Build strong teams by cultivating relationships between partners.

15. Build a strong Pre-ETS service team by cultivating relationships between partners (Work Force Centers, Community Long Term Providers, Social Security Centers, local and state governmental agencies)

B. Deliverables

The Contractor shall:

1. Provide monthly reports by the 15th of each month, which shall include but not be limited to: student progress, project outcomes/progress, task completion, communication logs, reasons for delay of task implementation (if any), expenditures on project implementation, and results of overall project implementation, to NMDVR, or other organizations, or members, of the public upon request. Reports shall be provided either in hard copy or electronically.

C. Measurable Outcomes

The Contractor shall:

1. Ensure that all identified SWD will be provided an opportunity to receive and participate in Pre-employment transition services based on student enrollment data.
2. Provide information to 10 local business/organizations regarding the benefits of working with students with disabilities and promote inclusive work environment. Compliance will be measured through monthly reporting.
3. Refer potentially eligible students with disabilities (Age 14-21) to NMDVR. Compliance will be measured based on each district, school, or Contractor data identifying SWD.

III. PRE-ETS CURRICULUM

A. Job Exploration:

- The student's vocational interest inventory results (career clusters inventory, “my next move”, career interest inventory, O-net, Picture Interest career survey, PII, CareerOne Stop, Careers Cluster Interest Survey, Holland, Photo career quiz, You Tube videos/Finding the right job) The career interest inventory also assesses the appropriateness, or fit, of jobs which may be of interest to students
- Attendance at a job fair (virtual/in person)
- The labor markets
- In-demand industries and occupations,
- Non-traditional employment options,
- Identification of career pathways of interest to the students
- Career Awareness
- Career Speakers

- Career Student Organization
- Goal setting workshops Group and individual discovery
- Participate in job site tours (virtually/in person)
- Resume writing and vocational profile building workshops

B. Work Based and Learning Experiences:

- Paid Work Experience
- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadowing
- Career Mentorship
- Career Related Competitions
- Non-paid Internships
- Practicum
- Service Learning projects
- Student-led Enterprises
- Simulated Workplace Experience
- Non-Paid Work Experience
- Volunteering

C. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational program:

- identify interests, abilities,
- Attend college fairs (virtual/in person)
- Promote use of self-advocacy skills
- Completion of two campus tours (in person or virtual)
- Degree path exploration workshops
- Tours to include financial aid services the job center, disability services and admission
- Presentations by local trade school (3 per year)
- assist with application/ enrollment process
- document academic accommodations
- advocate for needed accommodations & services
- talents, needs, learning style preferences and goals
- promote use of executive function skills
- assist with researching career & PSE options
- promote participation in PSE preparation classes, etc.
- connect to PSE resources/ services/websites
- identify financial aid options
- take career vocational assessments
- familiarize students with education and vocational laws
- identify technology needs
- identify admission tests accommodations

- provide PSE information to family members
- access services & supports from developmental/ intellectual disabilities service agency, if eligible

D. Workplace Readiness Training (to develop social skills and independent living:

- Soft Skills
- Interview Skills Practice
- Good Hygiene
- Time management
- Appropriate behavior/dress
- Customer service
- Money management and banking
- Food preparation, gardening, and agriculture
- Public transportation
- Computer and internet literacy
- Entrepreneurship
- Assistive technology and workplace accommodations
- Using a cell phone
- Nutrition/meal preparation
- Community safety
- Communication

E. Instruction in self-advocacy:

- Self-awareness
- Disability understanding
- disability disclosure
- decision making
- set goals
- evaluate options
- identify independence
- accommodations
- request & utilize accommodations
- know your rights & responsibilities
- self-determination
- know how to request & accept help
- intrinsic motivation
- taking a leadership role
- in support plans
- assertiveness
- problem solving
- monitor progress

IV. INFORMATION

The NMDVR anticipates awarding a contract with a two (2) year term, renewable for two (2) additional years, on a year by year basis, at the NMDVR's discretion. The start date for each contract will vary, based upon evaluation of informal proposals and construction of agreements.

V. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

While this is an informal solicitation, interested Pre-ETS Contractors must submit a proposal responding in the form of a thorough narrative to each evaluation factor below. Proposals will be evaluated and reviewed, taking into consideration the evaluation factors. Contract award will be based on a Contractor's ability to meet the required criteria, reasonably proposed costs and qualifications.

A. Contractor Experience

Contractors must provide information about their firm/company/school district that demonstrates the ability to provide sufficient professional competence, meet time schedules, accommodate cost considerations and project administration requirements. Indicate the relationship of the scope of work in this solicitation to other current or past contracts or projects. Indicate proposed work schedules and milestones, with completion methods and strategies. Demonstrate or indicate project team organization and working relationships.

B. Contractor Qualifications

Contractors must submit a list, with resumes, of all proposed professional team members, including any subcontractors, who will be performing services under this Agreement. The list shall include an attached narrative that describes the specific relevant experience of each team member, including subcontractors, if any, in relation to the role that the member will perform for this Agreement. The narrative shall include the name of each person and a thorough description of her or his education, knowledge, areas of expertise, relevant experience and any certifications or other professional credentials.

C. Contractor's Understanding of Objectives and Approach to the Scope of Work

Contractors must explain their understanding, or familiarity, with the desired scope of work, or similar works, based on past experience. Contractor's must provide a **thorough** narrative describing the approach the firm/company/school district will use to accomplish the Scope of Work, considering all Pre-ETS curriculum. Milestone charts may be used to describe the tasks to be performed, the time frame for each task and the proposed staff member, including subcontractors if any, designated for the completion of each task. Whether a milestone chart is used or not, the Contractor should clearly explain his/her firm's approach to fulfilling the Scope of Work.

D. Cost

Contractors shall propose **a monthly, firm, fixed, fully-loaded lump sum cost proposal.** Cost proposals shall include travel to and from the off-site workplace, to the on-site workplace, if applicable. The monthly, firm, fixed, fully-loaded lump sum cost proposal should be itemized, listing in detail, at a minimum:

- Hourly rates to be charged by type of personnel, including sub-contractors if applicable;
- Number of monthly hours, per staff member, estimated to complete the Scope of Work (this may be presented in phases of the work);
- Number of students who will be served; and
- Additional items including, but not limited to, travel, per diem, fringe benefits and overhead.

The Contractor shall include any other expense not mentioned above. Hourly rates per staff member, the number of hours per staff member, and additional monthly costs must calculate and equate to the Contractor's monthly, firm, fixed, fully-loaded lump sum cost proposal. Cost proposals shall exclude applicable New Mexico Gross Receipts tax and shall be valid for sixty (60) days subject to all action by the NMDVR.

VI. PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SUBMISSION

All informal proposals must be typewritten on standard 8 1/2 x 11 paper, with tabs delineating each section. Offerors must limit their proposals to twenty (20) pages.

A. Proposal Organization

The proposal must be organized and indexed in the following format and must contain, at a minimum, all listed items in the sequence indicated:

1. Letter of Transmittal
2. Table of Contents
3. Response to Evaluation Criteria
 - a. Contractor Experience
 - b. Contractor Qualifications
 - c. Contractor's Understanding of Objectives and Approach to the Scope of Work
 - d. Cost Proposal

Within each section of their proposal, Offerors should address the items in the order in which they appear in this Request for Informal Proposals. Any proposal that does not adhere to these requirements may be rejected.

B. Letter of Transmittal

Each proposal must be accompanied by a letter of transmittal. The letter of transmittal MUST:

1. Identify the submitting organization;
2. Identify the name and title of the person authorized by the organization to contractually obligate the organization;
3. Identify the name, title and telephone number of the person authorized to negotiate the contract on behalf of the organization;
4. Identify the names, titles and telephone numbers of persons to be contacted for clarification;
5. Be signed by the person authorized to contractually obligate the organization;

C. Proposal Submission

Each Offeror must provide one electronic copy of their proposal in PDF format. NMDVR reserves the right to reject any and all informal proposals in part or in whole. Informal proposals will be accepted and reviewed for a potential contract on an on-going basis. Informal proposals must be emailed to the NMDVR Procurement Section, to the attention of Joseph Padilla at: joseph.padilla@dvr.nm.gov.

If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Joseph Padilla at the email address listed above, or Charlene Chavez at charlene.chavez@dvr.nm.gov. Thank you for your participation.

VII. STEVEN'S AMENDMENT NOTICES

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) helps eligible individuals with documented disabilities find suitable employment. To do so, NMDVR partners with employers seeking opportunities to enhance and diversify their workforce. Vocational rehabilitation is a voluntary program supporting people who want to work. With a long history of success and proven methodology for making the best fits, NMDVR is committed to helping participants thrive in their communities.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7% of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2022, the total funds awarded was \$21,389,100. The remaining 21.3% (\$6,017,000) was funded by state appropriations and transfers from the Commission for the Blind and Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.