

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR JOBS PROGRAM
HOW/FIA-18-001-S
January 24, 2018

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES #2

Question 15: In October 2017, the Work Participation Rate (WPR) for Howard County was 22.0% when including Customers with Long Term Disabilities (LTD) and 35.8% when excluding Customers with LTD. In Baltimore County, the comparable figures were 22.0% and 35.6%, respectively. Given these figures, how is that DHS and Howard County DSS (DHS) have set a monthly TCA WPR of 60% as the minimal benchmark that the Contractor must attain in order to be paid 100% of its proposed price? (RE: TCA Payment Point 1, RFP pages 23 and 24).

**Response: The WPR 60% requirement in TCA Payment Point 1 is based primarily on final HCDSS historical data for the last 2 fiscal years, which is as follows:
WPR 2016: 40% with long term disabled (LTD) cases and 69% without LTD cases
WPR 2017: 42% with LTD cases and 67% without LTD cases**

Question 16: On page 10 of the RFP reference is made to the required “Employability Development Plan” that each Jobs Program Customer must have as well as to a “Self-Sufficiency Plan”. Is the Self-Sufficiency Plan the same thing as the Employability Development Plan, or something different?

Response: The Self-Sufficiency Plan (SSP) should be part of the customer’s overall employability development plan. This plan should focus on the customer’s barriers to employability and employment history. See Amendment #7.

Question 17: On page 10 of the RFP, it states that the Contractor must “complete Comprehensive Assessments no later than the end of the Customer’s 2nd week following enrollment and use the Assessment to help draft the Customer’s Employability Plan.” However, under TCA “Payout Point 6” on page 25, the RFP states that the Contract must “engage (100% of) applicants and New Mandatory Recipients in Work Activity and Barrier Removal within 4 business days of enrollment. Does initiation of the Comprehensive Assessment constitute delivery of Work Activity and Barrier Removal services?

Response: No. The Comprehensive Assessment is not considered a Work Activity or Barrier Removal for purposes of Payout Point 6.

Question 18: On page 36 of the RFP, under “State Supplied Services,” you state that: The Contract Monitor or designee will provide one (1) hour of training to designated Contractor staff responsible for entering data in WORKS. We have a working acquaintance with the use of WORKS, on the basis of which we know that one hour of training is insufficient time for anyone to learn how to enter data in WORKS. We think that the State should provide more than one hour of training for this purpose, and on multiple occasions throughout the Contract period, as the data entry person may well have difficulties entering data into WORKS after only one of the training, and /or there may be turnover in the person with data entry responsibilities over the Contract period.

Response: The State will provide sixteen (16) hours (equivalent to 2 days worth of training). The first day will be Policy training and the second day will be System training. The Work Participation Specialist (WPS) will continue with on-site training weekly and be available for technical support for the duration of the contract. Refer to Amendment #5.

Question 19: Regarding service levels, the RFP indicates the following:

- * Monthly average census of 169 TCA, 1020 FSP and 15 NPEP
- * Annual service level requirements of up to 1200 participants per year.

The RFP price sheet indicates that comprehensive assessments will be paid for an estimated 240 TCA, 250 FSP, and 12 NPNP (NPEP) customers. Can you explain the variance between the estimated annual service levels (total 1200) and estimated comprehensive assessment pay points (total 502)?

Response: The number of comprehensive assessments indicated in the price sheet is based on historical data for each program category (TCA, FSP, and NPEP) and projected program goals. The 1200 figure is an *average* of the total number of customers engaged in Work Activities.

Question 20: Can you explain the rationale behind the estimated total of payout point #6 and how it related to estimated total payout point #5? What accounts for engagement being significantly larger than assessments?

Response: The estimated number for Payout Point 5 & Payout Point 6 in the Financial Proposal are estimates based on historical data. Customers may be engaged

in work activities, but, refuse to complete the assessment for privacy or other concerns, which would account for the disparity in the numbers within the payout points.

Question 21: Section 2.3.5.1.3 states, “TCA Customers who are enrolled in the Contractor’s program but who are in a State-Defined (barrier removal) Activity only will not be counted in the Contractor’s WPR”. Applying the same methodology to current WPR, what rate (even if estimated) did the County achieve on average during the 2017 calendar year?

**Response: HCDSS WPR 2016: 40% with LTD cases and 69% without LTD cases
HCDSS WPR 2017: 42% with LTD cases and 67% without LTD cases**

Question 22: Can you provide an estimated number of cases that are in a State Defined barrier removal activity on any given month and relative to the estimated 1200 cases per year?

Response: This information is not relevant, as Contractors will not be engaged with any of the customers in these barrier codes.

Question 23: Can you provide an estimated number of cases in OTM both on any given month and during the course of a year? Relatedly, what are the responsibilities of the contractor related to this population while the Exemption is in place?

Response: Historically, HCDSS maintains an average of 15 TCA customers in short term exemption codes. This group is closely monitored by WPS to transition the customers quickly to work eligible activities, unless determined eligible for exemptions that would not count against the Work Participation Rate (OTB/OTG) or a transition into long-term disable category. Customers will only be referred to the Contractor after the exemption period has been completed.

Question 24: As per the RFP Price Sheet, the estimated # of Payout Points 1 and 2 add to 168 job placements. How does that relate to current state and federal goals for the County?

Response: The state and federal WPR goal for TCA customers is reflected in Payout Point 1 (TCA), which is 60% of work eligible customers engaged in federally defined work activities.

Question 25: Please provide the average number of annual cases at each center.

Response: Please refer to Section 2.2 of the RFP for historical data regarding each program for Howard County.

Question 26: Clarify what employment counselors would be doing prior to placement of client with job placement firm?

Response: The term “employment counselors” is not specifically used in the RFP. However, the contractor is responsible for providing all staff necessary to carry out the services required under the RFP and the Contractor’s proposed program.

Question 27: Provide an example of what would make a client not eligible for referral?

Response: An applicant or a recipient who is a caretaker for a needy relative, or a customer determined to be disabled would not be eligible for referral.

Question 28: What is the difference between the plan referenced in Section 2.3.3.9 and the plan referenced in Section 2.3.3.10?

Response: Refer to Section 2.3.3.8 in the RFP for what should be included in 2.3.3.9. The SSP referenced in 2.3.3.10 is to be completed after the Comprehensive Assessment. This should discuss the results from the assessment, for example, strengths, weaknesses, education, and barriers. See Response #16 above and Amendment #7.

Question 29: How does removal of a client from the program affect the Contractor in regards to payment?

Response: If a Contractor refers the customer back to HCDSS to address issues or concerns, the Contractor will end the customer’s activity code and will no longer be responsible for that customer and will not include that customer in any WPR.

Question 30: Is the expectation that the Contractor will provide the employment counselors? Will the current Employment Counselors be available during the transition period?

Response: **The contractor is responsible for providing all staff necessary to carry out the services required under the RFP and the Contractor’s proposed program. Any existing State will not continue working under the new contract. Refer to RFP Section 3.12 for State Supplied Services.**

Question 31: Section 3.4.3.1 page 24 – Payout Point #3. If there was a client who missed one week of work would they be able to be counted for payout point #3? Could a provision be allowed to address this before the proposal submission?

Response: **Please see Amendment #7, which revises Section 3.4.3.1**

Question 32: Regarding Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 (page 7 of the RFP), do the minimum qualifications and proof of satisfying these minimum qualifications have to be within the experience of the Offeror (Prime Contractor) solely, or can a Sub-Contractor assist in satisfying the minimum qualifications identified in the aforementioned RFP sections.

Response: **Only the Offeror’s experience may be used to meet the minimum qualifications. Sub-contractor experience may not be used.**

Question 33: Sections 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.2 (page 50 of the RFP) contain a contradiction. They state that the Title Page and the Table of Contents should be in Tab A, and that Claim of Confidentiality should be in Tab A-1. But they also indicate that the Claim of Confidentiality should be placed after the Title Page and before the Table of Contents. Please clarify your tabbing/ordering expectations.

Response: **The Title Page and the Table of Contents are to be submitted under Tab A. The Claim of Confidentiality is to be submitted under Tab A-1.**

Question 34: Section 5.4.5.6.2 (which should actually be 5.4.2.6.2, on page 51 of the RFP) emphasizes that the Work Plan should be “section by section.” Do you expect the Work Plan to cover every numbered section and subsection of Section 2, or only the top-level sections (e.g., 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.3.5, etc.)?

Response: **It is important for the Offeror to address each requirement in the RFP and describe and explain how it intends to meet each of the required tasks within the sections and sub-sections.**

Question 35: Is there a point system attached to the grading criteria?

Response: No. Proposals will be ranked, not scored.

Question 36: What are the page limits and formatting requirements for the technical proposal, if any?

Response: There are no page limits and no formatting requirements.

Question 37: What is the maximum allowed budget?

Response: The Department does not wish to provide this information.

Question 38: Is an Employment Data Report from a third-party verification service, such as The Work Number, an acceptable employment verification?

Response: Yes, so long as the report satisfies the requirements in Employment Verification Form (Attachment Z).

Question 39: For TCA Payout Point 6/NPEP & FSP Payout Point 4, how is 100% engagement defined? Is payment contingent on every single customer referred within the month becoming engaged in a work or barrier removal activity within 4 business days, or is the contractor paid per client that fully engages within 4 business days?

Response: Contractors shall be paid under Payout Point 6 for each customer that is placed in an approved Work Activity and Barrier Removal activity within 4 Business Days of the referral.

Question 40: What are the fixed unit prices per Payout Points per program for the past program year?

Response: These services are currently being provided by State.

Question 41: Some of the attachments, such as D-1-A for example, request a contract number. Should we leave that blank or put in the Solicitation number in the space provided?

Response: Please use the solicitation number.

Question 42: To clarify the memo on p. 178, are “J” coded activities counted as Core Work Activities prior to exhausting countable hours (240/360/420 or 4 consecutive weeks), and Non-Core Work Activities thereafter?

Response: Yes, that is correct.

Question 43: Are all Customers referred from HCDSS to the Contractor required to report to the Contractor for orientation and enrollment the following Monday after the referral date?

Response: All customers referred from HCDSS to the Contractor are required to report to the Contractor’s orientation. However, the day of orientation and enrollment will be determined by the Contractor and HCDSS post award.

Question 44: Can the Contractor propose to offer additional support services (in addition to Bus Passes and Gas Cards) to help participants remove barriers? If so, how will these be reimbursed by HCDSS?

Response: Offerors are encouraged to propose additional support services; however, all services shall be included in the Offeror’s fully loaded fixed unit prices. HCDSS will not reimburse for any other services unless specified in the RFP.

Question 45: In regard to Financial Proposal Instructions part E, does the Offeror need to initial and date every box with a price entered, or is a date and signature on the “Total Proposed Price” page sufficient?

Response: The Date and Signature on the “Total Proposed Price” page is sufficient.

Question 46: On the Financial Proposal Form, how were the estimated number of participants calculated?

Response: The data provided on the Financial Proposal is based on historical information and HCDSS goals.

Question 47: Section 3.12 State Supplied Services states that “Office Space and Equipment” will be provided (see 3.12.5 on page 36). Section 5.4.5.6.3 on page 52 states: The Offeror shall identify the location(s) from which it proposes to provide the services, including, if applicable, any current facilities that it operates, and any

required construction to satisfy the State's requirements as outlined in this RFP. Can you please clarify if the vendor is meant to find a location to provide services or will HCDSS be providing office space, as stated in Section 3.12.5?

Response: **This requirement has been removed. HCDSS will provide the office space and equipment as stated in Section 3.12.5. Please refer to Amendment #7.**

Question 48: Can multiple Job Preparation Workshops be offered each week? If so, can any of these be recurring? For example, is the vendor permitted to offer the Career Exploration and Personality Inventories workshop each week for new customers in addition to another workshop for returning customers?

Response: **Yes, multiple workshops may be offered each week. It is up to the Offeror to propose workshops that best meet the requirements of the RFP.**

Question 49: Please clarify Section 3.1.4 insurance requirements: For additional insured, is the State of Maryland (with address 100 Community Place, Crownsville, MD 21032) to be listed as the additional insured, or The Department of Human Services (with address 311 W. Saratoga St, Baltimore, MD 21201)?

Response: **"The State of Maryland" shall be named as the additional insured. The HCDSS address may be used for notices, correspondence, etc.**

Question 50: In reference to Attachment Q Section (B)(2), is the Contractor responsible for assessing TCA applicants for disabilities during the application process? It states this is done "before you assign the customer to a work activity". Is the "you" referencing HCDSS or the Contractor?

Response: **HCDSS will do the initial assessment and identify any barriers or disabilities before the customer is referred to Contractor. However, the Contractor must have policies and procedures in place to accommodate customers once referred in accordance with Attachment Q to ensure meaningful and equal access to programs.**

Question 51: In reference to Attachment Q Section (B)(2), will the Contractor have access to OWRA to both assess the customer and see their prior results?

Response: **Yes, the contractor will have online access to OWRA through WORKS, but not to a customer's prior results.**