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Workforce Education and Training (WET) Peer Personnel Training and Placement Frequently Ask Questions from Previous RFAs

Question 1: In terms of financial assistance provided on page 51, table 11, is that for financial assistance directly to the person for something like child care, unpaid work time, etc.?

Answer 1: Page 10 section IV of the RFA defines financial assistance. It states “Financial Assistance Costs” is defined as financial assistance for program participants to attend training which shall only be provided for costs, other than tuition or admission fees, incurred by participants to enable their participation in the activities sponsored by the proposing organization and may include, but not be limited to: transportation costs, uncompensated time-off and child care. Financial Assistance costs shall be no more than 10 percent of total proposed budget. This not a mandatory part of the budget, you can have it in your budget or not, but if you don’t it will always be zero because it is not budgeted.

Question 2: The second problem with this requirement is that you need to be able to train a sufficiently large pool of potential employees so that employers have choices. Expecting a 20 percent non-employable rate is unreasonable. Especially since these are entry level position and many potential employees may not be job ready.

Answer 2: The MQs in the RFA state the applicant must demonstrate experience in training and supporting individuals with lived experience. The expectations are that Grantees will put a process in place to select and train viable candidates for this program so that they can become job ready and to assist them with career placement. In addition, as this is a performance-based contract, the 80 percent placement rate ensures that the contractor will be reimbursed based on completion of services for this budget line item to receive full funding. However, the contractor may receive a pro-rated payment amount for placement rates up to 80 percent of placement.

Question 3: Civil service systems may have a slow hiring process so placement would almost have to be started from the beginning and is this your expectation? Do you believe that there are open positions available and the issue is just recruitment and training?

Answer 3: Program participants may be placed in a Peer Personnel position as an employee or volunteer that can be paid or un-paid in the PMHS. Placement in Community Based Organizations (CBOs) contracted by the county would also meet this requirement. The expectation is that there should be collaboration between the training entity and the county or CBO proposed in your application that will be the eventual employers of the

Peer Personnel. Page 5, bullet point 2 in the RFA states that grantees must “Ensure there is continued engagement and coordination with other County, CBO (Community Based Organizations), and education institutions/entities partners included in the application.” The County/CBO Participant Verification form on Page 21 will identify the number of open Peer Personnel Positions available and their training needs.

Question 4: Looking at the Public Mental Health System, can it be a substance abuse facility that has county Behavioral/Mental Health funding?

Answer 4: Yes, as long as it is using County behavioral/mental health funds, it doesn't matter if it's County or CBO

Question 5: Training program shall be no longer than one academic year or nine consecutive months. What is the length of an academic year? We believe it may be 12 months (4 quarters for example).

Answer 5: The Peer Personnel training program shall be no longer than one academic year or nine consecutive months in length. This could include four quarters within a 12 month period.

Question 6: I am a small Consultant, composed of just myself and the volunteers who sometimes help in all the work I do as a trainer and peer provider. May I apply for this RFA?

Answer 6: Yes, as long as you can meet the MQ requirement of the RFA. Additionally, applicants and/or their sub-contractors must have demonstrated experience in training and supporting individuals with lived experience as consumers, family members, and parents/caregivers. The goal of this RFA is to enter into a contract or contracts with Proposers who can furnish all the services described in the Scope of Work. Proposals that are submitted will be evaluated on their ability to meet the Scope of Work.

Question 7: Can there be changes to the training curricula, if awarded, after the start of the contract?

Answer 7: There is some flexibility to make changes, but you should meet the training curricula you outlined in your application. If after further communication with the employer it is determined that they want some training in other components there is flexibility to make changes. In the progress report, we have a section where we allow updates to the training plan. That being said, it is up to OSHPD to approve the change.

Question 8: Our organization is in a grant agreement for a Peer Professional Training and Placement program through OSHPD. Can we apply for this RFA?

Answer 8: Yes, as this is a separate RFA and funds awarded through other RFAs will not have any bearing during the evaluation process. However, previously awarded funds cannot be co-mingled with this RFA. Placement was mentioned as an important part of this RFA.

Question 9: If someone were placed in a job other than an identified peer personnel position, would that be acceptable?

Answer 9: No, the purpose of this RFA is to place individuals in peer personnel positions. Participants must be placed in a position, regardless of the position title, that is designated to provide peer personnel type services. In order to be counted, the peer should not be subject to mainly administrative duties, as providing peer personnel type services should be a critical component of their job duties whether paid or not.

Question 10: Are there any start-up costs available to organizations to cover project costs in the first quarter?

Answer 10: This is a performance based contract in which, if awarded, the contractor will be reimbursed based on completion of services per budget line item as identified in Page 9, section 5 item a “Cost Detail Format and Requirements” of the RFA. As such, there are no payments made to the contractor prior to the completion of services per budget line item.

Question 11: Are there any fees associated with this RFA?

Answer 11: There are no fees associated with submitting the RFA other than any costs incurred while developing and mailing the application. As stated on page 13, item I of the RFA, “Costs incurred for developing applications and in anticipation of award of the Grant Agreement are entirely the responsibility of the applicant and shall not be charged to the State of California.”

Question 12: Is any placement in the Mental Health field good enough?

Answer 12: Placement and Peer Personnel are defined on page 33, items 10 and 11. “Peer Personnel” means individuals with experience as a mental/behavioral health services consumer, family member, and/or parent/caregiver placed in designated peer positions within the Public Mental Health System. “Placement” means assignment in a Peer Personnel position as an employee or volunteer that can be paid or unpaid in the Public Mental Health System.

Question 13: Is there a limit or time frame for placement of someone to consider being successfully placed?

Answer 13: The only time limit is the length of the contract. As it is a performance based contract, contractors do not get paid until the individual is placed in the Public Mental Health System for this particular deliverable. There is also a “support” deliverable which requires the grantee to provide individuals support during the 6 months after placement. As funding for support will not be provided until participants have received the support after 6 months of their placement, applicants should also consider this when developing their placement timeframe.

Question 14: If after initial placement, an individual is placed with another agency or replaced; is that still the responsibility of the contractor?

Answer 14: Yes, the contractor would need to identify any updates in the progress report. There is a “placement” deliverable followed by a “support” deliverable. If the individual is placed and stays in a position for 6 months or more regardless if it is a different position from the initial placement, as long as they are in a peer position in the Public Mental Health System that would be appropriate for the “support” Deliverable.

Question 15: Does the definition of the Public Mental Health System include contractors within the PMHS that are private or for profit?

Answer 15: Yes, the definition is on page 33, item 12. "Public Mental Health System (PMHS)" means publicly funded mental health programs/services and entities that are administered, in whole or in part, by the State Departments or county. It does not include programs and/or services administered, in whole or in part by federal, state, county, or private correctional entities.

Question 16: For training can we include emerging and community practices or just evidence-based?

Answer 16: On page 5 OSHPD identifies that all activities, including training, have to be consistent with MHS values and priorities including wellness, recovery and resiliency principles. It also states that grantees shall "ensure focus on innovative, evidence-based, and community-identified strategies to achieve the goal of training and placing Peer Personnel in the PMHS. Therefore, you can propose training other than evidenced-based.

Question 17: If someone is not in a Peer designated role, but they provide Peer services would they be counted?

Answer 17: Participants must be placed in a position, regardless of the position title, that is designated to provide Peer Personnel type services. In order to be counted, the peer should not be subject to mainly administrative duties, as providing Peer Personnel type services should be a critical component to their job duties whether paid or not.

Question 18: On the evaluation tool on page 15 under references, do you evaluate an applicant's ability to work in partnership with a set of counties and CBOs? Do you place a priority on this to be a collaborative process? And will that put us at a disadvantage, because we have an agency that can handle all 6 components of this RFA?

Answer 18: It will depend on who the applicant is and how they support the training and placement of participants. We want collaboration between the training entity and the county or CBO whichever in your application you are proposing will be the eventual employers of the Peer Personnel. Page 5, bullet point 2 states that grantees must "Ensure there is continued engagement and coordination with other County, CBO (Community Based Organizations), and education institutions/entities partners included in the application". This can be considered in the evaluation of proposals.

Question 19: The \$500,000 total funding is that per year or total for all the years?

Answer 19: The \$500,000 is for all years. The total bid for the contract will not be more than \$500,000. We are not breaking the funding out by year in this contract. Grantee will have two years to complete the deliverables and must follow the budget limitations as identified in the Cost Detail Format and Requirements.

Question 20: Is there any flexibility on the training topics?

Answer 20: The RFA outlines the main training elements that are included in the training section on page 4. The fifth bullet identifies “Other related peer training and support functions necessary to facilitate the deployment of Peer Personnel as an effective and necessary service to clients and family members, and as triage and targeted case management personnel”. So there is flexibility on the different type of trainings, but there should be a focus on crisis management, suicide prevention, recovery planning and targeted case management assistance as identified in the training component description.

Question 21: What is the total number of participants that OSHPD wants contractors to serve each year?

Answer 21: OSHPD has not identified a total number. It is up to the applicants to determine how much their program can accomplish with the funding requested. There is a section on the evaluation tool on page 15, titled “Budget Rates”. OSHPD will score the cost effectiveness to successfully implement and administer the Peer Personnel program in relation to how many individuals are proposed to be trained, placed and supported and activities that are proposed to engage them.

Question 22: What is the geographic range needed or required in the application?

Answer 22: There is no set range needed or required. You can propose one county or multiple counties. Page 14, item c of the evaluation process states “the final awards will be to the highest scored applications. OSHPD intends for this RFA to support multiple Counties in California by providing a distribution of awards throughout the State. Applications seeking to support underserved geographic regions, which are not addressed by other similarly scored applications, may receive preference.” As such, geographical factors will be considered to ensure that the RFA promotes a distribution of awards across California if possible.

Question 23: What happens if a student drops out of the program?

Answer 23: It would be up to the applicant to decide to either add another student or not. As contractors will be paid for students’ completion of the training program, payment will not be received for a student that drops out unless the contractors adds another student. The contractor will be tied to the number of individuals they indicated would be trained, supported, and placed in the application.

Question 24: Who determines what completion of the training program is?

Answer 24: Applicants will need to identify mechanism to determine successful completion of the training program. Page 9, item viii of the RFA states “the applicant shall identify the mechanism that will be used to determine successful completion of courses and entire curricula”.

Question 25: On page 21 the RFA identifies the need to partner with Counties and CBOs. Is there is a minimum or maximum number for partnering with Counties and/or CBOs? Is there different weight for have 1 or 10?

Answer 25: No, there is no minimum or maximum number required. That being said, OSHPD is looking at geographic distribution of awards to support Counties and CBOs across the state so it can be considered when evaluating proposals.