

*Creating Competitive Employment Opportunities in  
Underserved/High Unemployment areas of Virginia*

**RFP # 10 - 328**

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Commissioner  
Virginia  
Department of Rehabilitative Services

# ***Creating Competitive Employment Opportunities in Underseved/High Unemployment areas of Virginia***

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## OVERVIEW

The Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) has identified up to \$750,000 for grant awards for Fiscal Year 2011 that will begin on September 1, 2010 with duration of 18 months ending on February 28, 2012. The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to solicit sealed proposals to establish a grant award(s) through competitive negotiations that support employment opportunities for persons with disabilities served through DRS. It is the intent of DRS to seek projects from one or more of Virginia's Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) to improve the overall employment of persons with disabilities.

## BACKGROUND

Employment Services to Individuals with Disabilities funding is authorized and available under Section 103(b) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, § 51.5-18 & 19 of the Code of Virginia, and the RSA Policy Directive, dated October 23, 1995. Funding under this RFP must be used to promote competitive employment opportunities in community-integrated settings for individuals with disabilities. Services can be group or individual.

DRS Technology and Employment Support Services (TESS) is issuing this RFP and will negotiate resulting grant awards. Award amounts are expected up to \$75,000. The actual number and type of projects funded will depend upon the nature and number of responses to the RFP.

Specifically, DRS is interested in contracting with Employment Services Organizations to create employment opportunities to enhance the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain competitive employment in community integrated settings.

Unemployment rates in Virginia have steadily risen over the last two years. The state unemployment rate as of February 28, 2010 was 7.6%. Certain parts of Virginia have been particularly affected by the economic climate resulting in a higher than average rate of unemployment. **This RFP targets employment of people with disabilities in counties and cities with unemployment rates exceeding 10%.** This includes 49 cities and counties.

The table below shows the cities and counties that are required to be served through this RFP and their respective unemployment rates as of February 28, 2010.

County/City	%	County/City	%	County/City	%
Martinsville city	21.4	Smyth County	12.2	Fredericksburg city	10.7
Williamsburg city	18.3	Franklin city	12.1	Buena Vista city	10.7
Henry County	16.4	Lexington city	11.8	Appomattox County	10.7
Page County	14.9	Wythe County	11.7	Richmond city	10.6
Danville city	14.9	Sussex County	11.6	Caroline County	10.5
Emporia city	14.6	Pittsylvania County	11.6	United States	10.4
Petersburg city	14.1	Russell County	11.5	Pulaski County	10.4
Patrick County	13.8	Lunenburg County	11.4	Highland County	10.4
Mecklenburg County	13.6	Hopewell city	11.2	Charlotte County	10.4
Lancaster County	13.6	Dickenson County	11.2	Buckingham County	10.3
Grayson County	13.5	Alleghany County	11.2	Buchanan County	10.3
Halifax County	13.4	Scott County	11.0	Northampton County	10.2
Carroll County	13.4	Charles City County	11.0	Shenandoah County	10.1
Brunswick County	13.3	Greensville County	10.9	Prince Edward County	10.0
Giles County	12.7	Essex County	10.9	Bristol city	10.0
Northumberland County	12.6	King and Queen County	10.8		
Covington city	12.4	Galax city	10.7		

## **PRIORITIES**

The following areas are priorities of the RFP. Responses must address *each* of the following priority areas in order to be considered for an award.

1. Provide services to cities and counties in Virginia with unemployment rates above 10%. Rate as of February 28, 2010 according to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)
2. Expand competitive employment opportunities in community integrated settings for persons with disabilities.
3. Increase the number of consumers working at or above minimum wage in community integrated settings.
4. Provide competitive employment services for populations currently underserved. This includes but is not limited to; veterans with disabilities, persons with serious mental illness, persons with intellectual disabilities, and persons with an autism spectrum disorder.

### **Who is Eligible?**

Public or private ESOs who are approved vendors of the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS).

### **Duration of Funding**

The length of time for each project will be 18 months.

### **Matching Funds**

No local match is required to respond to this RFP, however applicants should demonstrate a commitment to the project and its continuance at the end of DRS funding.

### **Use of Funds**

Awards through this grant may cover costs appropriate to the project design.

#### **Funds may be used for:**

- Staff positions in support of new project activities.
- Vehicles and equipment in support of project activities.
- Communications, printing, advertising and promotional products related to this project

#### **Funds may not be used for:**

- Operating expenses such as depreciation, utilities, consumable supplies,
- Administrative/indirect costs;
- Capital investment or operating revenue;
- Purchase of equipment for a third party; and
- Costs included in the approved vendorship rate.

## **PROPOSAL PREPARATION**

The following materials and forms needed to complete the application will be available on the DRS TESS website at: <http://www.vadrs.org/essp>

- Response Coversheet (2 Pages)
- Proposal Budget Form
- Required attachments

All proposals must include the following required elements. These areas will be evaluated completely in the review process along with overall project design. Any proposal that omits required elements or fails to adhere to the prescribed format or submission requirements described herein may result in that proposal being given a lower evaluation.

1. **Response Cover Sheet Page 1**– The Cover Sheet Form must be completed and signed by the Authorized Official of the applicant organization. This signature on the response coversheet certifies that the applicant, if awarded a grant, will comply with all federal, state and agency regulations, policies and procedures. The Authorized Official also certifies and has the institutional, managerial and financial capability to ensure proper planning, management and completion of the project as described in the approved proposal.

In instances where the applicant is a small organization, the Authorized Official and Project Coordinator may be the same person.

2. **Response Cover Sheet Page 2** - The proposal cover sheet must include an abstract that succinctly states the goals, objectives, activities contained in the proposed project and the outcomes expected from the project. Applicants must complete both pages of the Proposal cover sheet and may not exceed two (2) pages.
3. **Narrative** – The Proposal Narrative and the Work Plan together may not exceed 15 double-spaced pages. The following elements are required:
  - a. **Applicant Profile** – A brief overview of the structure and function of the applicant organization. Describe experience conducting similar programs and demonstrate why the applicant is uniquely qualified for the program and has the capacity to undertake this project. Include a description of the geographic area served and the resources available to persons with disabilities. Discuss current programs and any special expertise the organization may possess, qualifications of staff that will work on this project and number of consumers served in the last completed fiscal year.
  - b. **Background and Need of the Target Population** – Describe the target population. Identify disabilities of persons served. Identify the age range, cultural background and number of persons to be served. Identify and explain the specific needs of the target population and how the project will meet these needs. Explain past efforts to address these needs, explain how the project will complement these efforts and why grant funding is necessary.
  - c. **Collaboration** – Explain how the organization will collaborate with other organizations for this project. Where project success is dependent upon another organization, the

applicant must provide written documentation, such as a letter of commitment or memorandum of understanding, of the collaborative arrangement. Documentation should specify what responsibilities the partner organization has agreed to undertake. (Please note: a letter of commitment is not the same as a letter of support.) Discuss how you will address collaboration with organizations related to special populations. Discuss how the consumer, community and DRS has been involved in the programmatic and financial project planning, product and services marketing, and the identification of consumer needs.

d. **Project Evaluation** – Present an evaluation plan for the proposal describing how the applicant will assess attainment of project objectives with a clear measure of outcomes. The evaluation plan should describe the methodology planned for assessing project activities and products, including establishing baselines, the methods for evaluating project objectives and the systemic impact.

e. **Sustainability Plan** - The sustainability plan should describe how the project will continue after the conclusion of the grant period and what long-term impact can realistically be expected from the project after the end of grant funding.

f. **Proposal Description and Implementation**

1. Specific needs the project will meet;
2. How the project will augment and complement, but not duplicate other services and programs provided;
3. Why grant assistance is needed in terms of lack of organizational or alternative resources;
4. Any actions which have already been taken as well as resources allocated to address the need.
5. A Project Coordinator must be identified. The Project Coordinator will be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the grant project. The Project Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the timely and accurate submission of all required grant documents, such as the quarterly program reports, collection and reporting of data, and financial reporting. This person will be the main contact for the organization.

4. **Work Plan: Project Goal, Objectives, Activities** The Proposal Narrative (section above) and the Work Plan must be succinct, together may not exceed 15 double-spaced pages. (A sample Work Plan is also available on the DRS/ESSP website.) The following elements are required:

- a. **Project Goal** – State the overall project goal and briefly explain how it will achieve the outcomes of this RFP.
- b. **Objectives** – State project objectives that are specific and measurable and will achieve the stated Goal(s).

- c. **Activities** — For each project objective include a list of all activities (specific tasks, including project deliverables and products) that will achieve the objective; strategies for each activity; an explanation of how each activity will be accomplished; realistic start and end dates for accomplishing each activity; and the primary personnel who will carry out each activity. Any project products should include dissemination plans.

Include objectives related to specific requirements of this RFP:

1. Provide services to cities and counties in Virginia with unemployment rates above 10%. Rate as of February 28, 2010 according to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)
2. Expand competitive employment opportunities in community integrated settings for persons with disabilities.
3. Increase the number of consumers working at or above minimum wage in community integrated settings. (include number of consumers who achieve integrated competitive employment through this project)
4. Provide competitive employment services for populations currently underserved. This includes but is not limited to; veterans with disabilities, persons with serious mental illness, persons with intellectual disabilities, and persons with an autism spectrum disorder.

5. **Timeline**

Create timeline showing the expected start dates and ends dates for each objective and activity

6. **Financial Information**— All sections of the Budget Form must be completed.

**The following Expenditure Categories should be completed:**

***Personnel*** -- List each position by job title, annual salary (or wages), fringe benefits and % of time spent on project.

***Equipment:*** List all equipment for specific grant activities.

***Products and Deliverables.*** -- List all consumable materials developed as a result of this project.

Submit a Pricing Schedule (As shown in the Terms and Conditions Section IV).

7. **Required Attachments**

- a. Letters of Support from DRS Field Services staff for the proposal are required. Also, include letters of support from other organizations or industries.
- b. Board resolution signed by the chairperson indicating support.
- c. Job descriptions and a proposed organizational chart for proposal requests with funding for positions.
- d. Equipment List/Inventory for all proposals requesting equipment and/or vehicles valued over \$1000 (see page 6, Equipment Management). Unless taken from state contract,

single items costing \$5,000 to \$50,000 must use Quick Quote. Formal solicitation or documentation of sole source is required for single items over \$50,000.

- e. Letters of commitment or memoranda of understanding, if applicable. Letters of Commitment should demonstrate a commitment to be involved in the project, delineating the party's specific responsibilities for the project.
- f. Pricing Schedule

## **8. Submission Process**

### **1. Address all proposals to:**

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services  
Technology and Employment Support Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Richmond, Virginia 23229  
**Attention: Donna Bonessi**

- 2. The **sealed** proposal must be received by **4:00 p.m. on Thursday Jun 10, 2010**. Late proposals will not be accepted for any reason and will be returned to sender. Faxed or emailed proposals will not be accepted and will be returned to sender.
- 3. Proposals may be hand delivered. Applicants mailing proposals should allow sufficient mail delivery time to ensure DRS receipt by the closing date and time. Proposals or unsolicited amendments to proposals arriving after the stated closing will not be considered.
- 4. Submit the original and signed proposal along with ***5 copies and a CD containing the proposal.***
  - Do not staple the entire original proposal.
  - Do not use binders, notebooks or report covers for the proposal.
  - DO NOT append agency annual reports, program manuals or other lengthy publications to the grant proposal.

**Please note:** Any proposal that omits required elements or fails to adhere to the prescribed format or submission requirements described herein will result in that proposal being given a lower evaluation.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA AND AWARD**

The actual number and type of proposal(s) funded will depend upon the nature and number of responses to this RFP. The successful applicant(s) will be those that best respond to the criteria expressed in this RFP.

### **Evaluation**

#### ***Grant Review Panel***

A team comprised of representatives from DRS and ESO's will review each grant proposal. During the review process, grant review team members may direct staff to contact applicants to obtain additional information, including a request for a presentation. The process may also involve written requests to grant applicants for clarification or additional information covering materials presented in their application

A panel of reviewers will evaluate proposals submitted in response to this RFP. This panel may include representatives of the following groups:

- DRS Technology and Employment Support Services Unit;
- DRS Field Rehabilitation Services;
- Employment Services Organizations; and
- Other agencies of the Commonwealth.

***Evaluation Criteria*** – proposals are scored by each reviewer on:

- Technical Submission Requirements (10 points)
- Budget (10 points)
- Applicant Profile (5 points)
- Meeting Needs of Target Population (10 points)
- Collaboration (5 points)
- Project Evaluation (10 points)
- Sustainability Plan (10 points)
- Work Plan: Objectives, Activities, Outcomes & Performance Measures (20) points
- Response to the four priorities (20 points)
- Reviewer "Bonus" Points for Innovation and Creativity (5 points)

#### ***Oral Presentations:***

Applicants who submit a proposal in response to this RFP may be required to make an oral presentation of their proposal. This provides an opportunity for the applicant to clarify or elaborate on the proposal. This is a fact finding and explanation session only and does not include negotiation. The issuing agency will schedule the time and location of these presentations. Oral presentations are an option of the purchasing agency and may or may not be conducted.

### ***Grant Awards***

Selection shall be made of two or more applicants deemed to be fully qualified and best suited among those submitting proposals on the basis of the evaluation factors included in the Request for Proposals, including price, if so stated in the Request for Proposals. Negotiations shall be conducted with the applicants so selected. Price shall be considered, but need not be the sole determining factor. After negotiations have been conducted with each applicant so selected, the agency shall select the applicant(s) which, in its opinion, has made the best proposal, and shall award the grant to that applicant(s). The Commonwealth reserves the right to make multiple awards as a result of this solicitation. The Commonwealth may cancel this Request for Proposals or reject proposals at any time prior to an award, and is not required to furnish a statement of the reasons why a particular proposal was not deemed to be the most advantageous (*Code of Virginia, § 2.2-4359D*). Should the Commonwealth determine in writing and in its sole discretion that only one applicant is fully qualified, or that one applicant is clearly more highly qualified than the others under consideration, an award may be negotiated and awarded to that applicant. The award document will be a grant incorporating by reference all the requirements, terms and conditions of the solicitation and the contractor's proposal as negotiated.

### ***Award Notification***

Successful applicants will receive telephone notification from DRS Technology and Employment Support Services followed by written notification. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by Letter.

## **REPORTING AND DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS**

Each contractor will be required to submit reports to DRS, ATTN: Donna Bonessi, on a quarterly basis. Reports will provide a description of the service provided, to whom, and progress related to the accomplishments of proposal objectives and implementation plans. Receiving reports signifying the delivery of services as specified in the contract shall be submitted monthly with all requests for reimbursement by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month.

## **PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE**

An optional pre-proposal conference will be held on May 11, 2010 from 9:00-12:00 at the DRS Central Office, Richmond, VA and at five VTC sites throughout the State. The purpose of this conference is to allow potential applicants an opportunity to present questions and obtain clarification relative to any facet of this solicitation.

While attendance at this conference will not be a prerequisite to submitting a proposal, applicants who intend to submit a proposal are encouraged to attend. Bring a copy of the solicitation with you. Any changes resulting from this conference will be issued in a written addendum to the solicitation.