

STATE OF MARYLAND

Moderator: Scott Dennis
April 19, 2017
11:49 a.m. ET

OPERATOR: This is Conference # 175958109

Operator: Your conference is being recorded.

Jill Pierce: OK, all right. And just to remind, this is the (pre bid) call for the Maryland Work-Based Learning Collaborative. And so starting from the basics, what is the Maryland Work-Based Learning Collaborative?

It is a five-year research project. It is done through random design. It's funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, under the U.S. Department of Education. It has been awarded to the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services in partnership with the University of Maryland, College Park.

There have been five states selected for this grant by the federal government. Maryland is one of them. California, Maine, Massachusetts, and Vermont are the other four states.

The purpose of this Maryland Work-Based Learning Collaborative, the purpose of the grant is to enable our local education agencies in Maryland to implement a model of school to career transition services for students with disabilities. And it aims to improve the life of students with disabilities in Maryland by increasing their academic, career, and financial success.

It is a research project using a randomized control study or controlled design. That means that half of the students in the project will receive the project services or the treatment, and the other half will receive services as usual. That other half will be the control group.

Each LEA can receive up to \$50,000 over a two-year or 24-month period to implement the project services. And as mentioned, it is a randomized control design implemented across, it will six to eight diverse school districts in Maryland that are selected.

And we need to recruit a total of 400 students. And these 400 students will be among the LEAs that have been selected to participate. Of those 400 students, 200 will receive the services as usual, and the other 200 will receive the enhanced services, as defined by the project.

Eligible applicants, any of the 24 LEAs in the State of Maryland are eligible to apply. You must partner with your local DORS and demonstrate that you currently have or can establish an inter-agency transition team. And we believe it will take about six to eight LEAs for us to achieve the total of 400 students we need to conduct the research.

And as such, the LEAs who apply must also demonstrate capacity to achieve the targeted recruiting goal by providing an estimate of the number of potentially eligible students in your LEA, so those with an IEP or 504 plan, who are two years out of school exit. They can be either diploma or certificate-bound students.

And to accommodate the diversity in size and capacity for enrollment, any of the smaller LEAs, you may either form a consortium or receive funds on a pro-rated basis per the number of eligible students you have. And if you apply as a consortium, you must be able to demonstrate in your application how you consistently communicate and deliver the services across your various LEAs.

And a couple of important dates. The RFP, as you're aware, it was posted on the (MLC) website on April 3rd. And there are two pre-proposal information calls, the one we are on right now, and the second is scheduled for April 25th.

And these calls are being recorded. And the same information will be provided on both calls. And it will be made available for you.

All applications are due by May 19th, and they should be emailed to myself. My email is – and it's also on RFP, but it's jill.pierce@maryland.gov. And DORS will notify all the awardees by June 2nd. OK? And then I'm going to hand it back to (Kelly), who will get into a little more of the logistics.

(Kelly): OK, so let's talk about how the funds from this can be used. So the funds from the grant may be used for personnel expenses, including salaries or stipend for staff supporting the Maryland Work-Based Learning Collaborative Services in their LEA.

It may be used for project materials and/or supplies to support the implementation of services. And it may be used for per diem or travel for any project staff participating in any professional development activities. This may be attending meetings or training related to the project that staff would be attending.

There are some reporting requirements. So if you are awarded a grant, you will be required to submit quarterly progress and financial reports. These are due to DORS. Again, if awarded, we will provide you the dates that these are due.

You will also need to submit a final report encompassing all funding cycles within 60 days of the end of the grant period. And you will also be required to do regular tracking of student services and progress per a template provided. And we will provide you training and support on how to track these students. So if you are awarded, we will train you on this MIS system how to use it and track and submit these reports.

So let's talk a little bit about the application process. The application is worth a total of 50 points. The application is 10 pages in length. And we're asking to – you to keep it to 10 pages.

The key section – and there's two key sections. One of the key sections is the project narrative. It is worth 40 total points. Within the project narrative,

there are four parts, project activities, recruitment and enrollment, key personnel, and letters of – letters of commitment. Each of those are worth 10 points.

So I want to talk about project activities. In the project activities, you need to describe how your project will address specific activities. Specifically, you will need to describe the involvement of the LEA's transition coordinator, how you will establish and coordinate an inter-agency transition team.

We need you to describe the capacity of DORS staff and available Pre-ETS fund to maximize resources. And then your LEA's capacity to collect and share data with DORS and the team at the University of Maryland. And all of this is in the RFP.

You also need to talk about recruitment and enrollment. Specifically, what we would like you describe how you will assist us in the dissemination of project information and recruitment materials to eligible students to participate in the study. And we need you to share how you plan to achieve the targeted recruitment goal by providing an estimate number of potentially eligible students in your LEA. And Jill already talked about this.

So we're asking you to give us an estimate number of youth who are on IEPs or 504 plans, who are two years out from exit. And this can be youth who are on diploma track or certificate track.

In the project narrative, we also need you to describe key personnel. Under this section, you need to demonstrate that your project has their appropriate staff capacity and partners to meet the requirements of the project.

And then the last part of project narrative is letters of commitment. And we are requiring letters from all the partners that you will be working with, your superintendent's office and your local education agency participating in this project. So again, the project narrative is worth a total of 40 points.

The budget and budget narrative is the other major section that you need to respond to. This is worth a total of 10 points. The budget should detail every year of the project in which a separate itemized budget will be prepared.

It should demonstrate the extent in which the budget is reasonable, it's cost-effective, and integrates other sources of funding. All costs described in the budget narrative will appear in the budget – all costs that are in the budget narrative also need to be in your itemized budget.

Your application should also include a cover sheet and appendices. Your appendices might include a reference page, if you're referencing information in there. It might also includes sample curriculum or sample tools that you're already using in your LEA.

So just in summary, we wanted to highlight some of the benefits to you, should you be part of this exciting opportunity. You would be receiving up to \$50,000 for two years to strengthen work-based learning opportunities to transition-age students.

It will allow you to enhance transition planning. It allows you to boost IDEA Indicators 13 and 14. It allows you to get a jumpstart on using and understanding Pre-ETS funding.

It allows you to look at follow-up data on your students. It helps build capacity in your LEA. And then finally, you're offered some customized training and technical assistance to your staff at no cost to you. So these are some of the benefits, should you be awarded.

So now, we'd like to just stop here and ask if there's any questions. I also will note that we – some of the questions, we will need to take back and review. And we want to be fair about this.

So there are two – (three big) calls. Some of the questions we'll ask you to put into writing and send to Jill. And we will answer those in writing and send out to everybody. So we'll indicate if we can answer those on today's call, or if we need to have you put that in writing and get back to you on that. So any questions?

(Sandy Bichard): I have a question. This is (Sandy Bichard) from Worcester County Public School. I have two questions, actually. The first question is regarding the customized training and technical assistance.

In Worcester County, we're quite a distance away from the University of Maryland and (MLC). Will the training be taking place online, or (we'll be required) to travel to come to customized training? And if we're required to travel, how many sessions are you talking about?

(Kelly): Good question. We – most of the technical assistance and training, we'll be coming to you. There will be some that will be offered online. If there is training, we're thinking it would be probably once a year, where you will (inaudible) to us. And it would be a central (inaudible) or whoever is selected. We would try to make it central to whatever LEAs are selected.

(Sandy Bichard): OK, thank you, and you will be coming to us, too.

(Kelly): Yes, we will come to the LEAs.

(Sandy Bichard): OK, thank you. The second question I have is regarding letters of commitment. Now a lot of partnerships are formed after the grant is received. So besides the superintendent at school, who actually do you need letters of commitment for in the application?

(Kelly): We will need it from your superintendent's office. I'm just going to that page here quickly, DORS. And then if you're naming any other specific partners in there, at that point, you need to have – in your application, you would need to have letters of commitment from them.

But we understand that a number of partnerships will be developed after. On Page 10 – so the superintendent's office. But any partners that you're naming in your application that would be working with you, you should have a letter of commitment.

(Sandy Bichard): OK, thank you. Those are the only two questions I have (made). Thank you for your answers.

(Kelly): Sure.

Jeremy Walker: Hi, this is Jeremy Walker from Worcester County. You mentioned at the beginning the conversation about a five-year term. But then at the end, that it was over two years. So what is the difference on those?

(Kelly): Jill, do you want to take that, or do you want me to take that?

Jill Pierce: Sure, I can take it. And so it's a two-year grant period or 24 months for selected LEAs. So if your site is selected, you will receive the grant over a two-year period.

Jeremy Walker: OK, (unless) the research is being done over five years?

Jill Pierce: Correct.

Jeremy Walker: OK, thank you. Is that because – I think they said that it's kind of staggered? Half will get it in the first year, and then the other half will start in the second year? (I thought), like the first year, three to four get it. And then the second year, the other ones, two are selected.

Jill Pierce: Correct.

Jeremy Walker: Is that correct? OK.

Jill Pierce: Any other questions?

Female: Do you have any questions?

Female: No.

Female: OK.

(Mary Pat): (Kelly)?

(Kelly): Yes?

(Mary Pat): This is (Mary Pat) from Carroll County. I just have a quick question. And this may be more specific to Carroll County, but obviously, this sounds very similar to MSTC and ...

(Kelly): Yes.

(Mary Pat): And we sustained MSTC in our county for a number of years now. We call it Seamless Transition. We have build capacity. We have a transition counselor, over 40 individuals representing 25 different agencies. So is this something that Carroll County could apply for, even though we're already doing it?

(Kelly): Absolutely, it is something you can apply for, although you're already doing it. The enhanced services are around work-based learning and paid employment, certainly. But that doesn't – that doesn't preclude anybody from (inaudible) (I know) there are some other folks on the call who are a part of MSTC. Absolutely ...

(Mary Pat): OK.

(Kelly): You certainly can apply. I – but one thing I do want to say. Students who are part of PROMISE cannot be in this research study. So they would not be eligible. We have done a quick sort of look at numbers. We don't think we would be heading many. But we would know that when we go out to recruit. And so I just want to point that out as well.

Any of – all of you folks are impacted by PROMISE, but students who are part of the PROMISE, either control or enhanced services group, cannot be a part of this research project.

But again, that is something for us to worry about. Should you be selected, I just want to point that out to you. But MSTC does not preclude and nor did – would PROMISE preclude anybody from applying. But a student, if they are part of PROMISE, cannot be part of this.

Male: I have a question about – with the Summer Youth Employment. Is that to be one of the services, even if – like we do that now already with a lot of (our students), but some of them are going after the ...

(Kelly): I'm not quite sure what you mean by that. If, you know, I would ask that you put that in a question – written question to Jill. I think, if I understand it how – I think yes, it – certainly, summer is a great time to offer employment opportunities to youth.

Jill Pierce: (Kelly), I can jump in. So Summer Youth are...

(Kelly): Thanks, Jill.

Jill Pierce: Are services as usual and...

Male: OK.

Jill Pierce: It definitely can be something that you can access because part of – if you redo the RFP, part of it is, you know, accessing other resources that are already available, such as resources through DORS, specifically, the pre-employment services, which Summer Youth is a part of.

Male: Right. OK, thank you.

Jill Pierce: Sure.

(Mary Pat): So quick question. It's (Mary Pat) again. With MSTC, the Summer Youth are (paid in – experience) counted as their paid employment. And so if they had that opportunity, then, you know, that was pretty much it. So if we're – is paid employment is going to be in addition to the Summer Youth opportunity that our students are already getting?

Jill Pierce: Summer Youth is a paid opportunity that could count towards the paid opportunity.

(Mary Pat): OK.

(Amy Dwyer): Jill, if I can intervene. If it is paid by the employer.

Jill Pierce: Oh, yes.

(Amy Dwyer): ... definition of paid employment. Sorry, it's (Amy Dwyer) from University of Maryland. I'm note-taking today. But the paid employment – there will be definition of our intervention. And paid employment has to be paid by the employer in order for it to count as paid ...

Jill Pierce: OK because this was.

Male: (OK).

(Amy Dwyer): Yes, this was paid by DORS and it was counted as a paid employment. It was counted as their one-and-done paid employment experience. So...

(Kelly): Yes. In this case, if it's not paid by the employer, it would be counted as a work-based learning experience.

(Mary Pat): Perfect. Perfect ...

(Amy Dwyer): Right. OK, thank you.

Male: Do we – or do you guys have like a list of the services that we're talking about, the enhanced services, or ...

(Kelly): Can you – that one I am going to ask you to send in writing, you know, I...

Male: OK.

(Kelly): Yes, I think that we want to take that back to the team to see – you know, I don't know if it makes sense to send out to everybody right now or not, as we continue to define with our external evaluator. So that would be great if you could send that in and let us ...

Male: OK.

(Kelly): ... kind of (mull) that over.

Male: Yes, thank you.

(Kelly): But I will tell you, and we've already said this. The enhanced services are focused on work-based learning experiences. And paid work, in the criteria as they need to set around paid work, is paid directly by the employer. And we are putting a duration around that. We're looking at a six-week duration. But if – you know, we're putting criteria around this – the paid employment piece.

Male: OK.

Jill Pierce: And I just received an email from Harford County that they are also participating, but we cannot answer them for some reason. So if they have any questions, they are going to email right now.

(Kelly): Any other questions? And – OK, you can always email Jill your questions. And our team is meeting after the call on the 25th. We will review all questions that come in via email, (refund), and writing, and make sure that these get back out to all of you, as well, as we mentioned earlier, this call is being recorded. And we will get that out to folks as well.

Male: Now we have – in Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset, we have a tri-county transition inter-agency council that's pretty large. That would be considered what we're talking about, correct? Because working – it's with DORS and DDA and adult service providers, employers?

Jill Pierce: So is your question, if you all could apply together?

Male: That was a thought I had that – as we were sitting here. But I didn't know if it – other than that, it was just a thought I was thinking of.

Jill Pierce: Yes, if – and like I said earlier, if you – if you would like to apply as a consortium, that's fine. You just must, you know, be able to demonstrate on your application, you know, how you all consistently communicate and the service delivery kind of across your LEAs.

(Kelly): Any other questions? OK, so, Jill, I'm going to turn it back over to you to close up the call for us if there aren't any other questions.

Jill Pierce: Yes, all right. Well, thank you all for participating. And like I said, we will – this call has been recorded, and we do have notes. So all the information that we went over on this call, any questions that you would like to email to me in writing, we will get all this information back out to you, as well as the other LEAs, so that you all have the same information.

And the following call on the 25th, you are welcome to participate. But it is the exact same information that we will be going over. All right?

Male: Thank you.

Jill Pierce: All right. Thank you all.

Female: Thank you.

Female: Thank you.

Jill Pierce: Have a good one.

Male: Thank you.

Female: Thank you.

(Kelly): Bye.

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