



PETS RFA: Q&A



Summary of Slides

The following questions were submitted during the question period following the initial posting of the PETS RFA. A webinar was held on October 11, 2016 to provide responses to questions that were submitted. The following slides contain the content shared during the October 11, 2016 webinar.

The Divisions response to Question 9 has been revised from the original content to reflect information that the Divisions have received from federal authorities since holding the webinar.



Question 1

Can agencies submit more than one application to serve one county and another to serve another county or should they try to be combined into one proposal?

ANSWER:

If the provision of services is identical in all areas served, then the applicant should submit one proposal with geographical areas clearly identified. (See Section III, Subsection B, Parts 1 and 3)



Question 2

What is the grant cycle or do applicants set their own cycles? Will it be on a school calendar year or existing DVR contract period, October-September; or could it be July 1-June 30?

ANSWER: We are reviewing the applications in cycles. For applicants who receive awards, the contract period will be contingent on the nature of the program proposed. There is no Division requirement for contracts to be executed in a specific month. Part of the contract negotiations will include determining the contract execution date and length based on the timing of the application review and the nature of the proposed program.



Question 3

I am putting together an email list of “community partners” who will want to know about the PETS RFA. First of all, can public schools apply? What about community colleges?

ANSWER: Yes, state and local government entities may apply.



Question 3 (cont'd)

I am putting together an email list of “community partners” who will want to know about the PETS RFA.What about....Chambers of Commerce?

ANSWER: If a Chamber of Commerce is registered with the NC Secretary of State, then that Chamber may apply.



Question 3 (cont'd)

Within DVRS, will the Business Relations Representatives send the email from Alice Farrar to their business contacts/Chambers of Commerce and will the Rehab Counselors who work with specific school systems send it to their school contacts?

ANSWER: A communication was sent to Centers for Independent Living, NC DPI Exceptional Children's Division leadership, NC Workforce Development Boards, NC Division on Career Development and Transition leadership, NC Council on Developmental Disabilities leadership, the Post-Secondary Education Alliance, NC Division of Workforce Solutions youth services consultant, community rehabilitation programs, recently inquiring programs, and all VR staff. Recipients are invited to forward the information to any interested party. The Notice of Funding Availability is also publicly available at the following site:



Question 4

Does a program that offers comprehensive hands-on retail training experience for participants between the ages of 19 and 25 meet the RFA eligibility criteria?

ANSWER: Hands-on retail training experience *may* fall under the definition of work-based learning experiences if provided to individuals who meet the RFA definition of *student with a disability*. Any training provided after an individual is offered competitive employment and initiates this employment is no longer considered pre-employment transition services. Additionally, services to individuals over 21 may not be funded by the PETS grant.



Question 4 (cont'd)

Would this program fall under the eligible organizations and agencies?

ANSWER: Eligible applicant organizations or agencies shall be registered with the NC Secretary of State. Local and state government entities may also apply.



Question 5

Could students do an internship in the vocational rehabilitation facility?

ANSWER: Per Section II, Subsection E of the RFA, work-based learning experiences must be provided in integrated settings. Per Section II, Subsection C, *integrated community settings* are settings typically found in the community in which students with disabilities interact with nondisabled individuals other than nondisabled individuals who are providing services to those students with disabilities.

A vocational rehabilitation facility may not meet the definition of *integrated community setting*.



Question 5 (cont'd)

Could classroom work be done at a designated area or room at the vocational rehabilitation facility?

ANSWER: Pre-employment transition services other than work-based learning experiences may be provided in the applicant's facility. The method of service delivery should be effective in helping students with disabilities to achieve measurable gains in the specific PETS Service(s).



Question 5 (cont'd)

We have served the age group of 16 to 21, but no individuals as young as 14. Does this prohibit us from applying?

ANSWER: No. Eligible applications shall propose programs that serve *students with disabilities* as defined in the RFA. Students with disabilities include those beginning at age 14, but the applicant may target a more narrow population.



Question 5 (cont'd)

Will a collaboration between the applicant and the county's educational agencies and local VR office require a written memorandum of understanding or other agreement?

ANSWER: We do not require a formal written agreement at the time of application. However, as a part of Section II, Subsection B, part 9, *Ability to Leverage Additional Funds to Enhance Services*, applicants are encouraged to provide evidence of partnerships that build the applicant's capacity to provide proposed services/programs.



Question 5 (cont'd)

Can the collaboration with county's education agencies include private schools, charter schools and organized home-school groups?

ANSWER: The definition of students with disabilities do not exclude students served in private, charter, or home-schools. Partnerships that are being leveraged in order to serve these students are not prohibited.



Question 6

Will the webinar be recorded and available to view after the posted time?

ANSWER: The webinar will not be recorded. The webinar presentation materials will be distributed via email to those persons who submitted questions immediately following the live webinar.



Question 6 (cont'd)

Are public colleges and universities eligible to apply?

ANSWER: Yes, local and state government entities may apply.



Question 6 (cont'd)

Must an applicant serve all students “between the ages of 14 and 21” or may the project be limited to a certain subset of that population (specifically, certain ages within that range and certain disabilities)?

ANSWER: Applicants may propose projects that are limited to a certain subset of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities include those beginning at age 14 up to age 21, but the applicant may target a more narrow population. The project may also be limited to a specific target population that is defined by type of disability.



Question 6 (cont'd)

Are sub-awardee and/or multi-organization collaborations permissible?

ANSWER: Applicants shall describe any partner agencies/organizations in Section II, Subsection B, Part 2, *Organizational Overview*, and in Section II, Subsection B, part 9, *Ability to Leverage Additional Funds to Enhance Services*. Subcontracting may be permissible if these relationships are required to provide programs/services that are effective in helping students with disabilities to achieve measurable gains in the specific PETS Service(s). Subcontracting shall be a part of award negotiations.



Question 7

Must students have an open case with the Division prior to an PETS contract awardee providing services, or must the Division affirm that the student is qualified for services?

ANSWER: *Students with disabilities* are not required to apply for or be determined eligible for the VR program. However, the Division intends to utilize a PETS referral form in order to identify and serve students with disabilities. Once *students with disabilities* are identified, VR must refer these students for services being provided by PETS contract awardees. PETS contractors may direct students with disabilities to VR if a student has not already been made known to the Divisions.



Question 8

Our staff will work with people age 18 and up. Does that qualify?

ANSWER: Applicants may propose projects that are limited to a certain subset of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities include those beginning at age 14 up to age 21, but the applicant may target a more narrow population. Services to students with disabilities over 21 may not be funded by the PETS grant.



Question 9

Will start-up funds be provided to help develop a sustainable milestone funded system?

ANSWER: No. The compensation structure shall be based on actual achieved outcomes/milestones. The applicant shall provide a proposed compensation methodology narrative as outlined in Section II, Subsection B, Part 8.



Question 9 (cont'd)

If providing services in two or more counties, will there be one or multiple contracts with VR?

ANSWER: The number of contracts for a single a proposal is contingent on service delivery methods, target population, partner agencies/organizations, and other factors. Contract details shall be discussed with awardees during contract negotiations.



Question 9 (cont'd)

If we propose to start in the summer, will that make the proposal less competitive?

ANSWER: No, an application that proposes a summer start is not less competitive.



Question 9 (cont'd)

Can we get a milestone under job exploration to include the assessment and recruitment process?

ANSWER: It *may* be permissible to include a milestone for the assessment and recruitment process. The specific milestone/outcomes shall be described according to Section II, Subsection B, Part 5, *Specific PETS Activities and Outcomes/Milestones* and itemized according to Section II, Subsection B, Part 8, *Proposed Compensation Methodology*. Specific Outcomes/Milestones shall be phases or steps required to complete the PETS Activity and ultimately achieve the PETS Service Objective.



Question 9 (cont'd)

Can transportation costs be built into the proposal to pick up and transport students to class? Can the cost of a local transportation provider or Uber be built into the per student fee?

~~ANSWER: The Division may pay for travel costs incurred as a direct result of providing pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities from the funds reserved for the provision of PETS (page 41 of the Final Rule for Parts 361, 363, and 397). Therefore, student transportation costs, including costs associated with transportation providers, that are directly associated with the provision of PETS are permissible and should be explained in the Proposed Compensation Methodology.~~



Question 9 (cont'd)

Can transportation costs be built into the proposal to pick up and transport students to class? Can the cost of a local transportation provider or Uber be built into the per student fee?

The following response has been revised from the original effective June 8, 2017.

ANSWER: Transportation for students with disabilities is not considered one of the five PETS required activities as defined in the RFA and cannot be funded with PETS funds.



Question 9 (cont'd)

Can a VR counselor authorize a bus or special transportation pass so students can get to their PETS activities?

~~ANSWER: In theory, a VR Counselor may generate an authorization for transportation to support a student's participation in PETS. The Division is still developing policies and procedures for generating authorizations for PETS services. All Division authorizations which commit Division funds are issued at the professional discretion of the VR staff assigned to the client according to agency policies.~~



Question 9 (cont'd)

Can a VR counselor authorize a bus or special transportation pass so students can get to their PETS activities?

The following response has been revised from the original effective June 8, 2017.

ANSWER: In theory, a VR Counselor may generate an authorization for transportation to support a student's participation in PETS if that student is also eligible for traditional VR services and meets the Division's financial needs criteria. All Division authorizations which commit Division funds are issued at the professional discretion of the VR staff assigned to the client according to agency policies and that client's individualized plan for employment (IPE).



Question 10

When will rates be posted for PETS services and how will single events as opposed to year-long/semester programs be funded?

ANSWER: The applicant shall propose each Specific Outcome/Milestone according to Section II, Subsection B, Part 5, *Specific PETS Activities and Outcomes/Milestones* and itemize these outcomes/milestones according to Section II, Subsection B, Part 8, *Proposed Compensation Methodology*. Proposed outcomes and rates will be negotiated with PETS contract awardees.



Question 11

Does an existing community rehabilitation program have to be affiliated with a local management entity to be eligible to apply for this grant?

ANSWER: No.



Question 12

Are youth with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities eligible to receive PETS services?

ANSWER: Yes, if the youth meets the definition of a student with a disability.



Question 12 (cont'd)

If a community rehabilitation program has its own facility that employs persons with and without disabilities, is this considered an integrated community setting for PETS services?

ANSWER: Per Section II, Subsection E of the RFA, work-based learning experiences must be provided in integrated settings. Per Section II, Subsection C, *integrated community settings* are settings typically found in the community in which students with disabilities interact with nondisabled individuals other than nondisabled individuals who are providing services to those students with disabilities.

A vocational rehabilitation facility may not meet the definition of *integrated community setting*.



Question 12 (cont'd)

What is the difference between a student with a disability and an individual with a disability?

ANSWER: A student with a disability must be a student in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized educational program. A student must also be between the ages of 14 and 21. Individuals with disabilities includes students and non-students of any age.



Question 12 (cont'd)

Why is the age range of a student with a disability to 21 years instead of 22 years?

ANSWER: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and final regulations defines the max age range of a student with a disability as the maximum age at which individuals are eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In NC, students may receive IDEA services through age 21.



Question 13

Does the organization have to provide three years of service in order to be eligible?

ANSWER: The organization's direct service staff must have three or more years of related experiences in the specific area of pre-employment transition services for which the applicant is applying. This may or may not represent three years of experience by the organization itself.



Question 14

Can we subcontract with the community college to provide some of our proposed services focused on job exploration and counseling on postsecondary coursework?

ANSWER: Applicants shall describe any partner agencies/organizations in Section II, Subsection B, Part 2, *Organizational Overview*, and in Section II, Subsection B, part 9, *Ability to Leverage Additional Funds to Enhance Services*. Subcontracting may be permissible if these relationships are required to provide programs/services that are effective in helping students with disabilities to achieve measurable gains in the specific PETS Service(s). Subcontracting shall be a part of award negotiations.



Question 14 (cont'd)

Can funds be used to conduct individual assessments to identify student specific work readiness and internship goals?

ANSWER: Yes, these activities may fit under the PETS Services of job exploration counseling and workplace readiness training.



Question 14 (cont'd)

Can we include some consultation and training activities from our community rehabilitation program agency staff to support capacity building within our community partners.

ANSWER: No. The PETS RFA is intended to procure direct services to students with disabilities in the form of PETS Services. The PETS Services defined in the RFA represent the PETS “required activities” defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.



Question 14 (cont'd)

Can we submit a multi-year budget? If so, how long of a time period can we include? Can we submit a smaller budget the first year as we start up this program and then expand in subsequent years?

ANSWER: Yes, a multi-year budget may be submitted if this information presents a clear and reasonable forecast of costs and outcomes/milestones. The applicant may present as much information as necessary to ensure that the methodology being proposed is clear, accurate, defensible, and reasonable. The final outcome/milestone rates will be negotiated with the PETS contract awardee. The applicant should expect and be prepared to answer questions and provide information/documentation upon request related to the proposed compensation methodology. The Divisions rarely execute contracts exceeding 18 months.



Question 14 (cont'd)

Can we request additional funds for start-up costs including the development of collaborations, training program materials, and program effectiveness/milestone measures?

ANSWER: The compensation structure shall be based on actual achieved outcomes/milestones. The applicant shall provide a proposed compensation methodology narrative as outlined in Section II, Subsection B, Part 8.



Question 14 (cont'd)

If we have two independent projects (one within a community college setting and one within a high school setting), should we submit them separately or as one larger application?

ANSWER: The number of submissions is contingent on service delivery methods, target population, partner agencies/organizations, and other factors. If these factors are likely to drive different outcomes and/or deliverables, then the applicant is advised to submit two separate proposals. Regardless of application submission, contract details shall be discussed with awardees during contract negotiations.



Question 14 (cont'd)

Do you want letters of support from community partners or just a description of the partnership in the application narrative?

ANSWER: Letters of support may be submitted, however per Section II, Subsection B, Part 4, the program description, including the description of community partners shall not exceed four pages. Letters of support are not required at the time of application.



Question 14 (cont'd)

Do services only apply to students already approved through VR or can we serve any student identified through 504 services in school/community college settings?

ANSWER: *Students with disabilities* are not required to apply for or be determined eligible for the VR program. However, the Division intends to utilize a PETS referral form in order to identify and serve students with disabilities. Once *students with disabilities* are identified, VR must refer these students for services being provided by PETS contract awardees. PETS contractors may direct students with disabilities to VR if a student has not already been made known to the Divisions.



Additional Questions?

Additional questions or requests for a copy of the webinar presentation may be submitted via email to:
dvr.vrPETSrFA@dhhs.nc.gov.

Responses will be provided via email to the inquiring party within two weeks of submission.

