

**DORS
Career
Exploration and
Mentoring
Program for Blind
and Visually
Impaired
Students
Pre-Employment
Transition
Services**

No. OBVS/PreETS#1



**Request for Grant
Proposal**

Maryland State Department of
Education (MSDE)
Division of Rehabilitation Services
(DORS)
2301 Argonne Drive
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Release Date
Monday, December 16, 2019

Deadline for Application
Thursday, January 30, 2020
No later than 11:59 p.m. EST

Notification Date
On or before
Wednesday, February 5, 2020

Proposal Application Guide

Name of Program	Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Career Exploration and Mentoring Program for Blind and Visually Impaired Students, Pre-ETS #1
Authorization	Funding is made available through the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services -Vocational Rehabilitation Grants to States, Funds reserved for Pre-Employment Transition Services, CFDA 84.126 Award #H126A190027.
Total Funds Available	Up to \$300,000 is available per successful applicant for the entirety of the three (3) year program.
Total Number of Awards	<p>One (1) three-year award covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1 – February 10, 2020 to February 9, 2021 • Year 2 – February 10, 2021 to February 9, 2022 • Year 3 – February 10, 2022 to February 9, 2023
Deadline for Receipt of Application	<p>Thursday, January 30, 2020. No later than 11:59PM, EST. See Application Submission Instructions for details.</p>
Award Notification	Notification of successful applicant will be sent by email no later than Wednesday, February 5, 2020.
Background and Purpose	<p>Consistent with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), which amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, effective July 22, 2014, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) seeks to provide/coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), specifically to students with disabilities aged 14 through 21 years.</p> <p>Pre-ETS are similar to the regular ‘Transition Services’ but are focused on younger students, beginning at age 14 in at least high school. Services shall include, but are not necessarily limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruction in Self-Advocacy is training to develop self-knowledge which may include but is not limited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning about rights and responsibilities; b. Understanding one’s own disability, identifying independence goals, and self-awareness; c. Learning how to request and utilize accommodations, services or supports; d. Participating in youth leadership activities offered in educational or community settings; and e. Decision making, problem solving, setting goals, and listening skills. 2. Workplace Readiness Training (WPRT) may include in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of

the traditional school setting, and/or internship. WPRT to develop social skills and independent living skills necessary for employment may include, but is not limited to:

- a. Communication and interpersonal skills;
 - b. Financial literacy, including benefits planning services;
 - c. Orientation and mobility skills to access workplace readiness training or to learn to travel independently, travel planning;
 - d. Job-seeking skills;
 - e. Employer expectation awareness for punctuality and performance, as well as other “soft” skills necessary for employment; and
 - f. On-site business tours and informational interviews.
3. Job Exploration Counseling include skills and training to help with career related issues and may include, but are not limited to:
- a. Review of information regarding in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as nontraditional employment;
 - b. Administration of vocational interest inventories and provision of local labor market information that applies to the student’s particular interests; and
 - c. Identification of career pathways of interest to the students.
4. Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Education Program are skills and training that may include, but are not limited to:
- a. Exploring the types of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace;
 - b. Exploring postsecondary opportunities associated with career fields or pathways;
 - c. Developing self-advocacy skills for the purpose of identifying accommodations and services in an educational program, as well as providing resources that may be used to support individual student success in education and training (i.e., disability support services);
 - d. Advising students and parents or representatives on academic curricula and course offerings;
 - e. Providing information about college application and admissions processes; and
 - f. Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
5. Work-Based Learning Experiences may include opportunities that are available in school, after school, or outside the traditional school setting; however, services must be provided in an integrated setting in the community to the maximum extent possible. DORS and community partners

	<p>should seek every opportunity to provide work-based learning experiences in integrated settings before providing these services in non-integrated settings. Services may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordinating a program of job training and informational interviews to research employers; b. Participating in work-site tours to learn about necessary job skills; c. Participating in job shadowing; d. Participating in mentoring opportunities; and e. Developing on-site work-based experiences, paid or unpaid (i.e., Internships, volunteering, practicums, or service learning opportunities). <p>The purpose of the OBVS Career Exploration and Mentoring Program for Blind and Visually Impaired Students is to: provide funding to qualified entities for the provision of statewide mentoring services through Pre-Employment Training Services for up to 15 students who are blind or visually impaired; assist those students transitioning to employment and/or post-secondary education; and increase work readiness.</p> <p>Mentoring is the process through which a more experienced individual encourages and assists a less experienced individual to develop his or her potential within a shared area of interest. Mentoring relationships can keep students from special populations in school, contribute to positive self-esteem, and identify realistic career and academic goals. Research indicates that mentoring is especially effective in helping youth with disabilities transition into the workplace and adulthood.</p>
<p>Required Components</p>	<p>The applicant shall provide Pre Employment Transitioning Services (Pre-ETS), as defined herein, through a mentoring model of service provision. Services shall be provided in a combination of in-person and virtual contacts between students and mentors. Students must be determined eligible for DORS Vocational Rehabilitation Services or meet qualification requirements for Pre-ETS as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be at least 14 years of age but no more than 21 years of age (has not reached 22nd birthday); 2. Have a documented blindness or visual disability. Disability may be documented by submission of qualifying medical documentation signed by a medical provider, a copy of the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), or Section 504 Plan; and 3. Be currently enrolled as a student in a secondary or post-secondary education program.

Technical Assistance	For RFP technical assistance, please contact: Mr.Elmuttasim Fadl, Staff Specialist for Transitioning, Email: elmuttasim.fadl@maryland.gov
Renewable	At sole discretion of MSDE/DORS
Geographic Area	Maryland.
Required Components of Application	<p>Responses to this RFP should describe specific strategies for developing and carrying out career exploration and mentoring activities, to supplement and not supplant school-based transition services.</p> <p>The proposed program shall serve up to 15 (fifteen) student mentees per calendar year.</p> <p>The description of what will be provided within the proposed services includes, at a minimum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Program dates, time, and locations (e.g., evenings, weekends, after school, or in school). A minimum of one in-person contact is required monthly; other contact may be by phone or web-based; 2. Program length of service – number of days, weeks, hours per session, per day; 3. Program detailed curriculum outline for the days or sessions of the program offerings with information and/or activities to be provided each session; and 4. Program referral process for a student interested in participating in the program.
Memorandum of Understanding	Successful applicant is required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (see Attachment A for sample MOU), that delineate the roles and responsibilities of partners, including the reporting of individual monthly student mentee reports; quarterly progress and financial reports; and final summary reports. Failure to comply fully with the MOU and MSDE/DORS Assurances (Attachment B) may subject the grantee to penalties as outlined by 34 CFR 76 and 80.43.
Limitations on the Use of Funds	<p>Responses should outline costs for the provision of the Career Exploration and Mentoring Program for Blind and Visually Impaired Students as a Pre-Employment Transition Service. Funds may be used for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personnel expenses, including salary and fringe, for the Peer-Mentoring Coordinator(s); 2. Administrative costs; 3. Mileage; and 4. Program material and supplies to support the implementation of the program. <p>Cost(s) incurred outside the project period (e.g., prior to the approval of the funding) will not be funded. No funds will be allowed for meals or food. Funds may not be used for construction or renovation or to pay for indirect or subsequent time beyond the project period.</p>

Budget	Proposed cost of the program, per student, per week, per session, per quarter and per year; and information to support the actual cost to provide the program (number of staff, number of consumers, staff rate of pay, and other costs associated with the program). Total budget shall not exceed \$100,000 per year.
Proposal Review	<p>The review of proposals will be conducted as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applications will undergo a technical review upon submission to ensure completeness. 2. A Review Committee established by MSDE/DORS will evaluate applications using a scoring rubric outlined in this RFP. 3. Applicants may be contacted for clarifications as determined by the Review Committee. 4. Final approval for awards will be determined by the Review Committee.
Applicant Requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Established non-profit or education program or organization with extensive experience and expertise in the provision of Pre-ETS services to the blind and visually impaired. A list of agencies for which similar work has been done shall be provided. 2. Demonstrate that the organization has the personnel, resources and the time to conduct proposed services and projects. 3. Certify that it and its principals are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by a federal department or agency; as per Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, Debarment and Suspension, and implemented at 2 CFR 200.213, and 2 CFR Part 180 (Attachment C). 4. Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that delineates roles and responsibilities, particularly receipt of payments for services. Payment will be made on a cost reimbursement basis and will be delivered on a cost per student basis, per quarter, per year. (Sample MOU attached). 5. If proposer is an out-of- state entity, a certificate of authority to do business in Maryland must be submitted. 6. Certify that all employees, agents, volunteers, and contractors, who have contact with students receiving Pre-ETS through this grant are fingerprinted and have a background check in compliance with Family Law Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, Section 5-550 through 5-557. 7. Certify that no employees, agents, volunteers, and/or contractors, who have contact with students receiving Pre-ETS through this grant are a registered sex offender, defined in Criminal Procedure Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, Section 11-701, who are prohibited from entering school property or property where formal or informal child care is provided under the Criminal Procedure Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, Section 11-722.

	<p>Priority will be given to projects that show a productive history of providing work-based learning experiences in integrated settings.</p>
Deliverables	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Submit quarterly progress reports and an annual report by the established due date. All reports should be submitted electronically in word and pdf format to Elmuttasim Fadl, email, elmuttasim.fadl@maryland.gov. If unable to submit the required reports electronically, mail the report not later than the established due date separately to: Elmuttasim Fadl, DORS/OBVS, 2301 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.2. Keep and maintain adequate, legible, genuine, current and complete records of services rendered under the terms of the grant and shall make available all such records to DORS, or its designated representatives, for a period of five (5) calendar years following contract expiration. Failure to comply with this provision, including a failure that occurs after the grant expires or is canceled, shall be deemed a material breach of the contract and require repayment to the DORS all amounts received for any services which are not adequately verified and fully documented by contractors' records.3. Provide copies of any brochures/materials developed by the project.4. Verify all consumers referred by DORS. Establish a referral form to be used by DORS staff to make referrals to the Career Exploration and Mentoring Program and distribute to DORS staff. Establish a standard acceptance letter to be sent to the consumer and the DORS counselor that documents acceptance into the Program and start of services.5. The grantee shall maintain records and documents relating to the performance of the MOU and shall keep all such records and documents for five (5) years after the completion of the MOU, and shall make such records available for inspection and audit by authorized representatives of DORS and the State of Maryland (See Attachment B, #4).

PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposal Cover Sheet (0 points)

Every proposal must use the Proposal Cover Sheet (Attachment D), and address response in the following order

A. Need (20 points)

1. The needs addressed by the project;
2. How those needs were identified;
3. How the project will meet those needs; and
4. The benefits to be gained by meeting those needs.

B. Plan of Operation (25 points)

1. The quality of the plan of operation;
2. How well the objectives relate to the purpose of the project;
3. The effectiveness of the management plan to ensure proper administration of the project;
4. Identification of key individuals responsible for implementation of the project's objectives;
5. Use of the applicant's resources and personnel to achieve the objectives;
6. Scope of Pre-Employment Services and projected number of persons to be served;
7. How the applicant will ensure that project participants who are otherwise eligible to participate are selected without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age (14 to 21), or disability; and
8. How the applicant will communicate with the local OBVS staff to encourage cross-referrals, information and resource sharing. How will this information be tracked?

C. Key Personnel (10 points)

1. Qualifications of project director;
2. Qualifications of key personnel;
3. Time that each person will commit to the project;
4. Experience and training in fields related to the objectives of the project; and
5. How the applicant will ensure that its personnel are selected without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or handicapping condition.

D. Applicant Experience and Resources (20 points)

1. Extent of knowledge and background in the field of blindness;
2. Previous experience in operating rehabilitation programs and/or providing Pre-ETS services or services to transition age students;
3. Adequacy of resources that the applicant plans to devote to the project including personnel, facilities, equipment and supplies, etc.; and
4. Previous performance on DORS contracts/grants, if applicable.

E. Budget and Cost Effectiveness (20 points)

1. Costs are reasonable and adequate to carry out the objectives of the project;
2. Administrative cost is low; and
3. Services are cost-effective.

F. Evaluation (5 points)

Consideration is given to the quality of the evaluation plan, including the extent to which the evaluation methods are appropriate to the project, are objective, and are quantifiable. The evaluations should include quality assurance, consumer input/satisfaction and budgetary oversight. A copy of all evaluation forms to be utilized should be included in the proposal.

Appendices (0 points)

No page limit

The following Appendices must be included but will not apply to the page limit of the Project Narrative. Include other Appendices as deemed necessary:

1. Curriculum overview (for both group activities and activities expected of the mentors)
2. MSDE Recipient Assurances - *signed (blue ink)*;
3. Budget Narrative/Justification; and
4. Letters of Commitment

TOTAL MAXIMUM POINTS=100

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

- A. The program narrative must not exceed 25 pages.
- B. The abstract must not exceed one (1) page – double spaced.
- C. The original proposal cover sheet must be signed in blue ink.
- D. All pages of the project narrative must use one-inch margins, pages numbered, with a font size of 12 point.
- E. Charts, worksheets, and tables, if applicable, may be single spaced with a 10-point type font.
- F. MSDE Recipient Assurances (Attachment E) signed in blue ink.

PROPOSAL ORDER:

- A. Proposal Cover Sheet (see attached)
- B. Abstract
- C. MSDE Assurances (signed)
- D. Proposal Narrative:
 1. Extent of Need
 2. Goals and objectives
 3. Plan of Operation – Strategies and Activities
 4. Evaluation and Dissemination
 5. Management Plan/Key Personnel
 6. Experiences and Resources
 7. Coordination and Collaboration
- E. Budget narrative and justification
- F. Appendices (do not count as pages)
 1. Organizational Chart
 2. Board of Directors
 3. Resumes of key personnel who will work on the grant
 4. Job Descriptions of personnel who will work on the grant

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION:

1 (ONE) hard copy to:

Division of Rehabilitation Services
Attention: Elmuttasim A. Fadl, M.ED., CRC
2301 Argonne Drive
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

AND

1 electronic copy to:

Elmuttasim Fadl:
Elmuttasim.Fadl@maryland.gov

THE PROPOSAL MUST BE SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN 11:59 P.M. ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2020.

Non-discrimination Statement

The Maryland State department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry/national origin, color, disability, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, religion sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For inquiries related to Department policy, please contact:

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