

ANNOUNCEMENT OF REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST Youth Transition Pilot Programs

There will be optional informational sessions to have questions about applying answered at 3:00 on 1/4/24 and 1/18/24 at the link below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81220372576>

Proposals can be submitted electronically to IVRS Counselor Specialist Paul Fuller at the following email address: paul.fuller@iowa.gov

Proposals must be submitted by 11:59 pm on 1/31/24.

Introduction

This is an announcement by Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC). Iowa was one of 14 states awarded a five-year Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment grant in October of 2022 allowing for the creation of the Iowa Blueprint for Change (IBC). Over the next four years, the goal of the project is to further enhance Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) activities and outcomes, particularly for persons working in, or contemplating subminimum wage, as well as all persons with the most significant disabilities who are unemployed and/or underemployed. This will be accomplished through a complex systems change initiative that uses a multi-model approach to guide the work.

Part of that work is to identify opportunities to establish pilot programs that utilize innovative methods to increase access to CIE for youth with the most significant disabilities. A youth is considered an individual enrolled in high school. Two pilot sites will be chosen for specialized services in the current or upcoming school year. Additionally, two more pilot sites will be chosen each subsequent year after the first year to incorporate 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 school years. Programs that are selected will be given financial, administrative, data collection, training, and other implementation related resources as appropriate to help ensure that pilots are adequately supported. Educators and local Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) have an understanding of what programs and services serve the youth and families they work with best. The IBC team encourages school districts that are considering submitting letters of interest to embrace creativity and innovation when designing new programs, Individual Placement and Support for Youth (IPS-Y) and Customized Employment (CE) plans. As long as the students will have greater access to CIE that is specific, individualized, and the results are quantifiable, there is an opportunity for a truly unique suggestion to be considered.

Definitions Applicable to this Announcement

CD and CE: Customized Discovery and Customized Employment

CIE: Competitive Integrated Employment

CRP: Community Resource Partner

DIF: Disability Innovation Fund

ES: Employment Specialist

IBC: Iowa Blueprint for Change

IPS: Individual Placement and Support

IVRS: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

"Area education agency or AEA" means a school corporation that provides services to school districts including but not limited to, superintendency services, personnel services, business management services, specialized maintenance services, and transportation services. (as defined in Iowa Code 273.7A).

"Behavioral health specialist" means the staff person providing information and expertise on many categories of behavioral health regardless of the entity providing the service or the program in which the member is enrolled.

"Case manager or care coordinator" means the staff person providing all categories of case management services regardless of the entity providing the service or the program in which the member is enrolled. (as defined in IAC 441.90.1).

"Competitive Integrated Employment or CIE" means work in the competitive labor market that: 1. Is performed on a full-time or part-time basis, including self-employment, in an integrated setting and for which the job candidate is compensated; 2. Is at a location where the employee interacts for the purpose of performing the duties of the position with other employees within the particular work unit and the entire work site, and, as appropriate to the work performed, other persons who are not individuals with disabilities to the same extent that individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are in comparable positions interact with other persons; and 3. Presents opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities who have similar positions. (as defined in IAC 877.3.3).

"Customized employment or CE" means competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability; is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a disability and the business needs of the employer; and is carried out through flexible strategies. (as defined in IAC 877.33.3). Customized employment has previously been referred to as "customized discovery".

Further information on Customized Employment can be found here

www.griffinhammis.com/what-we-do/customized-employment/

"Employment specialist" means a person who has demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to provide integrated employment support services to a variety of client populations. (as defined in IAC 441.77.25).

"Individual placement and support or IPS" means the evidence-based practice of supported employment for individuals with a serious mental illness that is guided by the

following eight principles: focus on competitive employment; zero exclusion; integration of rehabilitation and mental health services; attention to worker preferences; personalized benefits counseling; rapid job search; systematic job development; and time-unlimited and individualized support. (as defined in IAC 441.77.25.1).

Additional resources can be found here: www.iowacebh.org/individual-placement-support/

“Local education agency or LEA” means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within the state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of the state, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in the state as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools. (as defined in IAC 281.120.23).

"Mental Health and Disability Services or MHDS Region" operates as the 'regional administrator' or 'regional administrative entity' to ensure that the residents have local access to needed mental health and disability services regardless of the location of their residence. MHDS Regions are defined in Iowa Code 225C.6B.

“Youth” refers to an individual between the ages of 14 and 21 enrolled in high school.

Target Population

The target population for receipt of the transition pilot programs will be youth with the most significant disabilities, youth currently receiving social security benefits based on their current disability concerns, or youth that could potentially be eligible for benefits based on their disability. Priority given to applicants whose target population includes individuals enrolled at a level 2 or level 3 school district as it pertains to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-DA).

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

It will be understood by the entities chosen for pilot sites that Pre-ETS services will be delivered parallel to CE and IPS-Y funded through the DIF grant.

Timeline for Submission for Letter of Interest:

Letters of interest should be returned to the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) IBC team no later than 11:59 pm January 31st of 2024.

How to Apply

Applicants who are interested in submitting a letter of interest should:

- Read all pages of this announcement.
- Collaborate with agencies in your proposed service area to form your team. This will include but may not be limited to IVRS staff, case managers, and local Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). Discuss and determine each entity's role.

- Attend the bi-weekly Youth IBC State Team meetings.
- Respond to this announcement by submitting an application in partnership with other required entities by 1/31/24.

Strong letters of interest will demonstrate a clear intent in developing a pilot program that is staffed with youth willing to participate in fidelity training, adheres to established CIE best practices and policies, collects and compiles pertinent data, embraces collaboration, and additional parameters throughout and beyond the pilot program's lifetime.

Bi-weekly IBC Youth meetings are held on Thursdays at 3:00 pm. If you would like to join to gather more information, learn about IBC, and provide input please use the following zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81220372576>

There will be optional informational sessions to have questions answered about the application process at 3:00 pm on 1/4/24 and 1/18/24 at the above link.

Neither this announcement nor the receipt of any responses thereto, shall create any obligation to the State of Iowa to make any award pursuant hereto. The award of any Letter of Interest resulting from this announcement shall be at the sole discretion of the Division. Neither this Announcement nor any response ("interest") submitted herein will be construed as a legal offer.

Confidential Information

Potential respondents are advised that materials contained in proposals are subject to the Iowa Public Records Law, and after the site selection these materials may be viewed and/or copied by any member of the public, including news agencies and competitors. Potential respondents are advised that inclusion of any confidential materials may result in the State removing the proposal from consideration and returning the proposal to the respondent.

Where To Submit Proposals

Proposals can be submitted electronically to IVRS Counselor Specialist Paul Fuller at the following email address: paul.fuller@iowa.gov. These will be due by January 31, 2024 11:59 pm.

Transition Pilot Programs Funding

- The selected Youth Transition pilot sites will participate in training and technical assistance from members of the IBC collective impact forum.
- Selected providers of the Youth Transition pilot programs will be eligible for services funding based on the CE and IPS-Y Services Funding model through IVRS and Iowa Medicaid. This milestone funding framework is in accordance with the Medicaid Habilitation services rules and the IVRS Manual.

- Applicants should collaborate with local CRPs, MHDS Regions, LEAs, and other organizations to secure seed funding to offset implementation costs incurred in the start-up of IPS-Y and/or CE. These costs include staffing and operations until a full caseload is attained and milestone outcome payments are being earned. Start-up and administrative funding needs could also be met from Ticket to Work, and/or foundations or grants.
- Funding for Year 1. Start-up or seed funding is NOT available directly from the State.
- Respondents shall develop a budget in **Attachment B** appropriate to their organization's capabilities to begin implementation of IPS-Y and/or CE. Up to \$80,000 is available to each pilot for expenses related to vocational rehabilitation clients. It is anticipated that start-up costs will exceed this amount therefore additional financial collaboration is necessary to support this project. The budget shall be created in Attachment B, to inform state leaders of realistic start-up costs. Typical allowable costs are shown in Attachment B.

Applicant Eligibility

Entities who are interested in providing services through the Youth Transition Pilot Programs are eligible to form a team and respond to this announcement. Enrollment as a provider for IVRS is required to bill for services provided. Additionally, enrollment as a provider for Iowa Medicaid is strongly encouraged.

Job candidate's receiving IPS-Y, CE, or any other applicable service through the IBC must be an IVRS eligible Job Candidate (JC). You can find the IVRS application and process located here:

<https://ivrs.iowa.gov/welcome-ivrs/ivrs-process>

Youth Transition Teams may include mental health providers, IVRS, local education agencies (LEAs), local area education agencies (AEAs), and local CRPs.

The Youth Transition Team includes the following essential personnel (staff may overlap in categories below):

- an employment specialist who will be trained in IPS-Y and/ or CE
- an IPS-Y/ CE Supervisor
- a behavioral health specialist for teams doing IPS-Y
- a case manager and/or care coordinator
- an IVRS staff member
- a LEA representative
- a CRP, or organization in the process of becoming a CRP
- You are encouraged to include a Peer Support Specialist and/or Family Peer Advocate on your team.

Letter of Agreement

Two pilot sites may be selected and will enter into a Letter of Agreement with IVRS.

As part of the IBC/ DIF grant IVRS has secured funding for training and technical assistance to implement IPS-Y and CE in the academic setting. Other transition services may be considered on an as needed basis. It will be understood by the entities chosen for pilot sites that Pre-ETS services will be delivered parallel to CE and IPS-Y funded through the DIF grant. The Youth Transition Teams (YTT) will learn together to implement the principles of CE and IPS-Y, leading to an early intervention for youth resulting in a systems change. Technical and training assistance will be individualized for each YTT based on job candidate, LEA, and CRP need.

This letter of agreement commits selected sites to the following:

- Have employment staff in place within 30 days of agreement.
- Participate in technical assistance and training with the federally funded IBC grant. These activities are summarized here:
- Each YTT pilot site will engage in a team strategic planning meeting and readiness review, and YTT kick-off training. These are anticipated to be held within 1 month of determining pilot sites.
- Travel for your team may be required. And may be reimbursable at the rate of \$0.50 a mile.
- There will be trainings for CE/ IPS-Y program Employment Specialist, CE/IPS-Y Supervisors, and Leadership staff provided through the IBC grant. These trainings cover specific CE and IPS-Y program operations with the focus on fidelity and efficiency, and include at least monthly technical assistance. These sessions require approximately 3 days of staff commitment and may be virtual or in person or a combination. Ideally they'll occur in months 3 and 4 of the project.
- Participation in bi-weekly stakeholder meetings.
- Outreach to members of diverse and/or underserved communities* within your proposed geographic service area for open staff positions and clients. (*i.e., persons of racial or ethnic groups other than white; religious groups other than Christian; refugees or immigrants; LGBTQ+; people with disabilities; people who are Justice involved; extreme rural/farming culture; or other identified diverse communities).
- Reporting outcomes data from your YTT CE/ IPS-Y program, monthly and quarterly as required.
- Report routine CE/ IPS-Y program data to IVRS.
- Participate in a baseline fidelity review after six months of operations estimated to be late in 2024. Below is a brief summary of the Fidelity Review:
 - As an evidence-based practice, when IPS-Y programs are implemented to good fidelity, better program outcomes are achieved. A fidelity review is a tool to measure the level of implementation of an

evidence-based practice. Baseline fidelity reviews occur 6 months after program implementation. Reviews are then performed every 6 months until “good fidelity” is achieved, at which time reviews occur annually thereafter. More information on the fidelity review process for IPS-Y can be found here: <https://ipsworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/IPS-y-revised-10-7-23.pdf>.

Anticipated Timeline of Start-up Activities:

Selection Criteria

Applicants must electronically submit a written proposal that addresses all the following items to be considered for this opportunity. The maximum possible score is 100.

1. **A Cover Letter.** The cover letter should address the applicant's capacity to maintain competent and trained staff to carry out program tasks, and contain assurances that staff will be on-boarded by the Kick-off meeting, and that the applicant agrees to collect program data and submit it monthly in the prescribed format. (5 Points)
2. **A written project narrative** not to exceed 5 pages in Arial or Helvetica 12-point, using 1.05 to 1.5 line-spacing, with 1 line space between paragraphs, and 1" margins. This should include a description of the respondent's interest in and ability to provide CE and/or IPS-Y services to the target population in the proposed counties or Region, and assurances that the applicant can meet the requirements in the "Letter of Agreement" as described above. (10 Points)
3. Completion of **Attachment A** "CE/ IPS-Y Application Questionnaire" (75 points)
4. Completion of the **Attachment B** "Budget Summary" (5 points)
5. **Letters of Support** from the partnering agencies representing each of the required Team roles identified in the Applicant Eligibility section, demonstrating commitment to the Youth Transition Team, and how they will support this work. (5 points)
6. Additional points will be awarded to applicants whose school district is that of a level 2 or 3 district as it pertains to the individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA-DA). (5 points for level 2, and 10 points for level 3)

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by a committee selected by the IVRS leadership and DIF teams. The scores of each committee member for each applicant will be averaged into a final score. Based on the results of the evaluation, two of the proposal(s) determined to be most advantageous to the State, considering all factors may be selected by the Department for further action. Final selection of the awards will be made by the IVRS Division Administrator or designee.

Additional Resources

A link to current providers for IPS and CE can be found here:

<https://ivrs.iowa.gov/welcome-ivrs/iowa-blueprint-change-dif-grant>

When customized discovery (CD) is referenced on this map, it is referring to CE.

It is not required to utilize these current providers as a new provider can be identified when a new pilot site is initiated.

A link to all existing IPS providers can be found here: <https://www.iowacebh.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Iowa-IPS-Service-Map-ASPIRE-2.0-5.2023.pdf> ([iowacebh.org](https://www.iowacebh.org)).

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ATTACHMENT A

YOUTH TRANSITION PILOT APPLICATION QUESTIONNAIRE with scoring

Responses will be reviewed as part of the application process. Please note, it is not expected that respondents will have adopted all areas outlined in this attachment at the time proposals are submitted. Potential pilots will work toward implementation of required components during the program implementation, with technical assistance provided by state and national partners. Provide all responses below or transfer to a separate document.

- 1. Why does the agency leadership want to participate in the youth transition pilot to provide CE and/ or IPS-Y in the academic setting, and what has the agency done to promote employment for students with the most significantly disability? (5 points)**
- 2. Describe how the agency leadership will be involved in the implementation of CE and/ or IPS-Y? Include how CE/IPS-Y will become embedded in agency culture and who will be involved in the steering committee, the kickoff and implementation and other activities. (5 points)**
- 3. Describe agency collaborations that will be used to support your proposal and YTT. Agency collaborations are encouraged to include those listed in the Applicant Eligibility section (refer to section above). Be sure to reference how each agency will be involved and any committed funding by the agency. (10 points)**
- 4. If you have begun to form your YTT, please describe in detail activities that have occurred to date. If you have not begun to form your YTT, please describe in detail how you plan to begin forming your YTT and when this will occur. (Have team members agreed to participate? Has your team fully formed and held meetings together? Etc.) (5 points)**
- 5. Your proposed Youth Transition Team will need an Employment Specialist (ES) who will work with youth from referral through job coaching services to case closure. Describe how this ES will be supported throughout this process of service delivery. (5 points)**
- 6. Your proposed Youth Transition Team's employment service partner will need staff who will manage/supervise (Supervisor) the CE and IPS employment services. Describe how this individual will provide supervisory guidance to the ES. (5 points)**
- 7. Describe the extent to which each of the remaining requisite roles are filled on your IPS-Y Team? (5 points)**
- 8. How do you plan on supporting students with transition services after high school graduation? How will implementation of IPS-Y and ES be made sustainable. (5 points)**
- 9. Describe populations or groups in your proposed service area that represent diversity from typical Iowa culture or routinely underserved**

populations (such as LatinX, African American, Asian, other refugee or immigrant groups, religious minorities, identification as LGBTQ+, disability, justice involved, predominance of extreme rural/farm culture, or other factors). (5 points)

- 10. Describe how you will conduct outreach to and provide services to eligible participants who identify as members of one or more groups that are traditionally underserved or high risk including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, refugee or immigrant status, identification as LGBTQ+, disability, justice involved, and/or extreme-rural farming culture. (5 points)**
- 11. Describe how the agency currently supports individuals who want to work, and plans on sustaining the youth transition pilot programs after the life of the grant? (5 points)**

ATTACHMENT B-BUDGET

Develop a budget appropriate for your organization's capabilities to begin implementation of the Youth Transition Pilot Program, not to exceed **\$80,000** for the federal fiscal year. This budget is intended for the contracted staff that will be providing the services under this Contract. The initial term of this Contract is from 2/1/2024 through September 30, 2024. This Contract may be renewed, at the University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disability's (UCEDD) discretion, in collaboration with IVRS, and subject to available funding, for up to three (3) one-year terms upon such terms and conditions as are agreed to by the parties.

EXHIBIT B ANNUAL BUDGET FFY24

Expense	Amount
Salaries	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Materials & Supplies	
Professional Development/Training	
Communications	
Indirect Costs: See Budget Narrative Section Below	
Total Budget	

UCEDD will reimburse the Contractor for one hundred (100) percent of the allowable costs that the Contractor incurs in performing the work under this Contract not to exceed \$80,000. UCEDD will not reimburse the Contractor for any cost that is contrary to any restriction or limitation in the grant, 2 CFR Part 200, or any other applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies, including State of Iowa policies. All grant funds distributed to the Contractor shall be used solely for the operation of this Contract.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Salaries: This budget line may consist of the salary/salaries for ___# of contracted staff. Accordingly, UCEDD, in collaboration with IVRS, will only reimburse for the time the contracted staff devotes to this Contract. This expense will be documented with payroll journals, printouts from the district accounting system, etc.

Fringe Benefits: This budget line may consist of the employer share of several fringe benefits for the contracted staff. The fringe benefits in this Contract may include: FICA/Medicare, IPERS/Retirement, family health dental insurance, family dental insurance, family dental insurance, and long-term disability. Payroll documentation including payroll journals, job description, and employment contract will be available to support all salary and fringe benefit costs charged to this agreement.

Travel: This budget line may consist of mileage, meals, lodging, and other various travel expenses for the contracted staff. Mileage, meals and lodging will be claimed at current rates, and will not exceed the State of Iowa rates listed here: <https://das.iowa.gov/state-employees/state-accounting/travel-relocation/state-travel> Meals will only be allowed when contracted staff is in overnight status. Detailed travel documentation will be kept for mileage and itemized receipts will be kept for lodging, registrations, and travel expenses including meals.

Materials & Supplies: This budget line may consist of instructional supplies, office expenses, equipment, printing, curriculum development and instruction, computer, etc. All supply costs will be directly related to this Contract and invoices will be kept to document cost.

Professional Development: This budget line may consist of training costs, workshops, presentations, consultation costs, and technical assistance related to improving the Youth Transition Pilot Programs. Invoices and copies of registrations and training agendas will be kept to document project-related costs.

Communications: This budget line may include the costs for cell phone/landline service/hotspot & etc. Neither UCEDD nor IVRS will provide the cell phone or landline equipment for the contracted staff. These items should be owned and or provided by the community school district (CSD).

Indirect Costs: This is the Unrestricted Indirect Cost Rate provided to the CSD by the DE. Use 2023-2024 rate for this budget period. The most current rate can be found here: <https://educateiowa.gov/documents/indirect-cost-rates>.

Notification of Staff Changes: Please contact UCEDD as major staff changes occur. Please include the temporary plan for meeting the needs of this contract, who will cover those duties, an estimated timeframe for temporary change, and permanent plan for replacement, and possible impact on the budget. Documentation required for your claim may change due to the staff changes.

Miscellaneous: Additional documentation may be requested upon review of claims submitted in order to make sure costs are reasonable, allowable, allocable and necessary.

(End of Exhibit B)