 **FLEX PROGRAM RFPs**

 ***Bidder Questions***

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**APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND QUALIFICATIONS**

**Please note that the preferred submission email address has changed.**

Proposal submissions should be directed to moedrfp@baltimorecity.gov. NOTE: Proposals directed to the previously designated email address (shantrice.coopermckoy@baltimorecity.gov) will not be penalized and will be forwarded to the correct personnel.

**Where/how can bidders access a copy of the presentation slides from the Bidders Conference and, on November 15, the response to questions?**

Bidders’ conference slides, this FAQ, and additional information are posted on MOED’s website at: <https://moed.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2023-10-27-public-notice-request-proposals-flex-program-participant-services>

**Is it possible for the list of bidders’ conference attendees to be shared so that bidders can reach out for potential partnerships for this application?**

Bidders interested in receiving a list of bidders’ conference attendees can reach out to MOED at moedrfp@baltimorecity.gov.

**Is the application to be submitted electronically and in person?**

Proposals are to be submitted via email only. No paper copies are required.

**Are bidders permitted to incorporate tables and/or figures into the Proposal Narrative or attach tables and/or figures as supporting documents?**

Yes. Both are permissible.

**The maximum Proposal Narrative length for a vendor proposing to deliver one FLEX service is 10 pages, or 20 pages for vendors proposing to deliver two or more services. Would attachments count toward the total length?**

Attachments are not counted toward the total Proposal Narrative length.

**Can the format for tables and/or figures deviate from the requirement to use a 12-point font and double-space?**

Yes, but please be mindful that all tables and/or figures must be legible to readers. We recommend at least a 10-point font for this purpose.

**Must the resumes also be 12pt font and double spaced?**

No, but please be mindful that these documents must be legible to readers. We recommend at least a 10-point font for this purpose.

**If proposing to deliver more than one FLEX service, is it satisfactory to supply a single Budget & Budget Justification, or is a separate Budget & Budget Justification required for each service?**

Applicants proposing to deliver more than one FLEX service should submit a single Budget and Budget Justification that includes all elements of the proposed program.

**How many letters of reference and/or commitment are required?**

This information is located under the Letters of Reference heading of the Technical Proposal Format section for each RFP. Please see tables of contents for page numbers.

**How should employer letters of commitment address their commitment to hire?**

Letters should demonstrate the applicant maintains partnerships with employers who have formally or informally agreed to hire people who graduated from the program. If the employer is willing to disclose numbers of participants previously hired, that information would be helpful.

**For the Outreach and Participant Engagement Services and Occupational Skills Training RFPs, is there an allocation of evaluation points to the individual criteria within the main proposal sections? The Case Management and Career Development Services and Behavioral Health Services RFPs provide such as breakdown of evaluation points.**

The Evaluation Criteria sections, including point allocations, are located on page 12 of the Outreach and Participant Engagement RFP, and page 13 of the Occupational Skills Training RFP.

**If an applicant proposes to deliver more than one service, can MOED elect not to fund some of the services proposed?**

Yes. If the review committee rates a particular proposed service lower than others in the proposal, MOED reserves the right to request the applicant rework their proposal and/or budget and to negotiate delivery of only the higher-rated services.

**APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS**

**Does the lead organization need to be a 501c3?**

No.

**Is it mandatory for applicants to be located in Baltimore City?**

No. Applicants should possess experience working with Baltimore City residents, but are not required to be located in the City in order to apply.

**Kindly provide more details on the insurance requirements. What are the coverage limits and what has to be covered?**

Insurance requirements are included in the Qualification and Responsibilities section of each RFP. Coverage limits are specified by category below:

* Professional Liability, Errors, and Omissions Insurance, at a limit of not less than $1,000,000.00 per occurrence in the event that service delivered pursuant to this Agreement, either directly or indirectly, involves professional services.
* Technology Liability, Errors, and Omissions Insurance, with annual, aggregate limits of no less than $1,000,000.00, pertaining to programming errors, software performance, and performance failures rendered by the Consultant or its agents or employees. If coverage is purchased on a “claims made” basis, the Consultant warrants continuation of coverage, either through policy renewals or the purchase of an extended discovery period from the date of contract termination, and/or conversion from a “claims made” form to an “occurrence” coverage form. Additionally, a three (3) year extended reporting period is required for those policies written on a “claims made basis”. Said policy shall be required in the event the services performed, pursuant to this Agreement, either directly or indirectly, involve or require technology related services.
* Cyber Liability Insurance including but not limited to Network Privacy, Technology, Security, Web-Media Services, Breach Containment, Technology Extortion, and Data Restoration, at a limit of not less than $1,000,000.00 per occurrence with an aggregate limit of $1,000,000.00 is required. If coverage is purchased on a “claims made” basis, the Consultant warrants continuation of coverage, either through policy renewals or the purchase of an extended discovery period from the date of contract termination, and/or conversion from a “claims made” form to an “occurrence” coverage form. Additionally, a three (3) year extended reporting period is required for those policies written on a “Claim’s Made Basis”. Said policy shall be required in the event the services performed, pursuant to this Agreement, either directly or indirectly, involve or require technology related services.
* Workers’ Compensation coverage as required by the State of Maryland or other applicable State’s law.
* Commercial General Liability Insurance, at a limit of not less than $1,000,000.00 per occurrence for claims arising out of bodily injuries or death, and property damages, including products and completed operations coverage. For those policies with aggregate limits, a minimum limit of $1,000,000.00 is required. Such insurance shall include contractual liability insurance.
* Business Automobile Liability at limits of not less than $1,000,000.00 per occurrence for claims arising out of bodily injuries or death, and property damages. The insurance shall apply to any owned, non-owned, leased or hired automobiles used in the performance of this Agreement.

**Does MOED require us to be licensed as an M/WBE to be eligible to apply?**

No. However, 26% of FLEX program funds are required to be awarded to M/WBEs, and M/WBE status will be considered by the review committee.

**Will 26% of the FLEX go to M/WBEs, or 26% of the funding given to MOED by DSS for this program would go to a M/WBE?**

At least 26% of the funds MOED is receiving from DSS must be allocated for M/WBEs.

**What if an applicant has applied for M/WBE designation but is still awaiting a decision on their status?**

Applicants are not required to be registered as M/WBEs in order to apply. However, 26% of FLEX program funds are required to be awarded to M/WBEs, and M/WBE status will be considered by the review committee. Updates regarding M/WBE status may be submitted by email to moedrfp@baltimorecity.gov under the subject line "M/WBE Status Update - [ORGANIZATION NAME] prior to January 12, 2024.

**If an M/WBE organization partners with a non-M/WBE organization for purposes of the FLEX program, how should funds be allocated in the budget to be responsive to the 26% M/WBE requirement?**

At least 26% of the budget should be allocated to the M/WBE partner organization.

**Must M/WBEs be certified by the state, or is the Baltimore City certification acceptable?**

State certification is preferred. Organizations interested in pursuing certification can find more information here: <https://gomdsmallbiz.maryland.gov/Pages/mbe-certification.aspx>

**Can one vendor have multiple contracts awarded?**

Yes.

**SERVICE POPULATION**

**Will providers recruit the participants or will DSS refer them?**

DSS will refer eligible TCA heads of household to MOED’s Workforce Reception Center. MOED staff conducts an orientation and triage process with these participants and will then direct them to the appropriate FLEX services.

Non-custodial co-parents and criminally involved young adult children of TCA heads of household are also eligible for FLEX services. DSS will not directly refer these participants. Instead, they will be engaged by the organization(s) selected to provide Outreach and Participant Engagement Services under that RFP.

**Must all participants be Baltimore City residents?**

All TCA heads of household referred by DSS will be residents of Baltimore City. Some non-custodial co-parents and/or criminally involved young adult children of TCA heads of household may reside outside the City.

**If the TCA head of household on the case is a Baltimore City resident, but their non-custodial co-parent and/or criminally involved young adult child is not, can we the co-parent or young adult child be served?**

Yes. However, if the participant(s) desire to be enrolled in other MOED services (e.g. WIOA ITA) then a waiver would be required from the Assistant Director, Chief of Adult Services before enrollment.

**Is there any percentage of the service population who are not English speakers?**

Presently, all participants are English speakers. However, we expect that to change as MOED transitions into being DSS’ sole service provider in the City. Unfortunately, we are unable to estimate the potential number of non-English-speakers who will be served under the FLEX program.

MOED maintains a partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Services and employs a Mobile Career Navigator who serves as a resource for the Spanish-speaking population. If an applicant has additional resources available to serve non-English-speakers, they should be outlined in the proposal.

**SERVICE DELIVERY**

**Are comprehensive case management services included in occupational skills training or is that a part of the RFP for case management services?**

Occupational skills training providers who include case management services as part of their program may submit a joint proposal addressing both services. Similarly, organizations whose proposed programs include elements of other requested proposals (such as Outreach and Participant Engagement or Behavioral Health Services) may submit joint proposals addressing those elements.

**The RFPs for Case Management and Career Development, Outreach and Participant Engagement, and Behavioral Health Services state that awarded organizations will deliver services, in whole or in part, at MOED’s Workforce Reception Center. If a vendor can also deliver services at another location, how should that be addressed in the application? How many hours would the organization be required to be on site at the Workforce Reception Center?**

The Workforce Reception Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM-4:30 PM. Participant orientations are held once per week, currently on Mondays. Participants are also present in the building on Thursdays and Fridays for bus pass distribution.

Our purpose in requiring vendors to be at least partially on-site is to ensure that participants have easy access and a warm hand-off to provider services. The preference would be for all organizations funded under these three RFPs to be on-site one day per week at minimum (such as for orientation).

Bidders who have capacity may propose to deliver services at another location and/or virtually the remainder of the time. Bidders proposing to host services at their own sites should be mindful of participant access issues and discuss them in their proposal, particularly if the site is located outside Baltimore City. Similarly, bidders proposing to deliver services virtually should clearly outline plans to make these services accessible and effective in the virtual environment.

**What will the average monthly caseload be? How long do participants engage in services, on average?**

DSS requires MOED to serve participants either until they obtain employment or until they no longer qualify for and/or wish to receive services. Participants may cycle in and out of FLEX services based on their needs.

Currently, MOED receives 30-35 referrals per week, and 20-25 of those referrals show up for orientation. We expect those numbers to increase as we transition into being DSS’ sole service provider, but are unable to provide a concrete estimate. Proposals should address the applicant’s monthly caseload capacity, but there is no minimum required monthly caseload.

**How would job placement services function under the FLEX program? Are providers required to place participants, or would those participants be referred to MOED’s Employer Services?**

If bidders offer employment placement services, we encourage them to include those services in their proposal. MOED also has a team of business service representatives who can assist participants with job placement and development.

**Under the Behavioral Health Services RFP, does MOED require just clinical services? Would psychosocial educational training services be considered?**

Yes.

**In the RFP for Case Management and Career Development Services, the Goal4 It! Stepping Stones plan is specifically referenced as a framework for service delivery. What if applicants have a different, but similar, model in place? Are they required to use Stepping Stones instead?**

MOED and DSS have developed a new tracking system—FLEX Tracker—for FLEX services. The FLEX Tracker’s fields are designed around the Stepping Stones plan. However, applicants are not required to use Stepping Stones as long as their proposed case management framework captures all of the data points required in FLEX Tracker. The required data points are listed in a document available on MOED’s website here: <https://moed.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2023-10-27-public-notice-request-proposals-flex-program-participant-services>

**PERFORMANCE**

**How many individuals are to be served annually and how many within the entire grant period?**

MOED expects to serve up to 2,500 FLEX participants annually. This translates to up to 12,500 participants being served between 2024 and 2028.

The level and type of services these participants might receive will be determined by their needs. (For example, some may require job placement services but not occupational skills training.) MOED is not able to provide specific estimates of how many participants will require each service.

**How should proposals address performance goals if estimated participant numbers are not available?**

Proposals should address the level of services the applicant is able to provide and the number of participants the applicant has capacity to serve at the funding levels requested.

**Is the ultimate goal of the FLEX program to place participants in employment?**

DSS requires MOED to work with FLEX participants until they obtain employment or until they are no longer eligible for and/or interested in receiving services. The goal is to achieve a 70% placement rate overall, and a 60% workforce participation rate. This goal will be achieved by a combination of services from MOED’s in-house team and from providers selected under this RFP.

The two FLEX program services directly related to job placement are Case Management and Career Development and Occupational Skills Training. Applicants proposing to deliver these services, singly or jointly, should address how many participants they expect to be able to place in employment. There is no minimum *number* of placements required, but the minimum placement and workforce participation *rates* should correspond to MOED’s overall goals.

**How will selected vendors be required to track and report their performance data? Will they be required to enter participant data in WORKS?**

Selected vendors will enter participant data into the newly developed FLEX Tracker system. They will also register in MOED’s Unite Us service referral platform and use the platform to refer participants to additional services. Information about both FLEX Tracker and Unite Us are posted on MOED’s website here: <https://moed.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2023-10-27-public-notice-request-proposals-flex-program-participant-services>.

Additionally, MOED may require vendors to register in the Maryland Workforce Exchange. If so, an onboarding process will be detailed and review sessions scheduled at a later date.

DSS does require that participant data be entered in WORKS, but this will be accomplished by in-house MOED staff, working off data entered in FLEX Tracker.

**BUDGET**

**Are all these awards structured as cost reimbursements?**
Yes.

**Will MOED honor the indirect cost rate options per the Uniform Guidance [2 CFR 200.332(a) (4] for the FLEX programs? In accordance with 2 CFR 200.332(a) (4), all pass-through entities in sub-awarding some or all of the Federal award to eligible sub-recipients must approve either:**

**1. The Federally-negotiated indirect cost rate,**

**2. The 10% de Minimis rate, or**

**3. Negotiate an indirect rate with the sub-recipient, which can be based on a prior negotiated rate between a different pass-through entity and the same sub-recipient. If basing the rate on a previously negotiated rate, the pass-through entity is not required to collect information justifying this rate, but may elect to do so.**

Yes.

**Please confirm whether the grant amounts listed in the RFPs are annual or for the entire grant period and confirm the periods of performance for each RFP.**

The grant amounts listed in the RFPs are for the entire grant period. Specifically:

Outreach and Participant Engagement: $1,000,000 available for services delivered between March 2024 and September 30, 2028

Case Management and Career Development: $2,125,000 available for services delivered between March 2024 and December 31, 2028

Behavioral Health Services: $500,000 available for services delivered between March 2024 and September 30, 2028

Occupational Skills Training: $2,187,500 available for services delivered between March 2024 and December 30, 2028.

**The RFP notes that the entire budget for occupational skills training is $2,187,500 ($437,500 annually) and that there will be up to 5 contracts given. Does this mean that each contract would be (if evenly distributed) $87,500 annually?**

Yes, if five awards were made and evenly distributed, each award would be $87,500 annually. Please note that MOED does not guarantee either the number or amount of contracts that will be awarded.

**We are applying for 3 out of the 4 areas of funding and given the maximum funding period of 4.75 years as well as various completion dates (Behavioral Health ends Sept. 2028 and Case Management ends Dec. 2028), we are not entirely sure which year of the budget should be “less” than the rest. Should our budget align with the MOED fiscal calendar? And if so, when does the MOED fiscal calendar begin and end?**

Applicants have the discretion to design their budgets within their proposed period of performance. They do not need to align with the MOED fiscal year.

**How many contracts will be awarded in total for all FLEX programs?**

Up to five contracts will be awarded for Occupational Skills Training. For other services, MOED may choose to award single or multiple contracts depending on proposals received.