



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES
Procurement Notice**

**Pre-employment Transition Services
Request for Qualifications
(PETS RFQ)**

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is seeking submissions from organizations/entities qualified to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) to high school students with disabilities, ages 16-21, in need of such services to prepare for future work experiences.

The goal of the PETS initiative is to improve post-school outcomes of students with disabilities in the areas of competitive employment, post-secondary education and independent living skills by providing statewide services in various settings including; schools, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholder locations.

The PETS include, but are not limited to, Peer Mentoring Services, Instruction in Self-Advocacy and Workplace Readiness Training. Assistive Technology Services are regarded to be an interrelated component of PETS and given their highly specialized nature are being distinctly included in this procurement.

Eligible Respondents shall be:

- Public/private non-profit or for-profit providers, organizations or companies; or
- School Districts; or
- Accredited Colleges and Universities; or
- Community Colleges; or
- Centers for Independent Living (CILs); or
- Current Contractors of DORS /Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (DORS/BRS)

Successful Respondents will be placed in a pool of qualified contractors that may be utilized over a five (5) year period.

Contracts, resulting from this procurement, are expected to be for over two (2) years in duration, beginning May 1, 2016, and ending September 30, 2018.

The Request for Qualifications is available in electronic format on the State Contracting Portal at <http://das.ct.gov/Director.aspx?Page=12> or on the DOR's website at <http://ct.gov/dors/site/default.asp>

The RFQ is also available from the Official Contact:

Name: Marcia McDonough, Contract Administration and Procurement
Address: 55 Farmington Avenue, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-424-5214
Fax: 860-424-5800
E-Mail: Marcia.McDonough@ct.gov

Deadline for submission of qualifications is **March 23, 2:00 PM EST.** Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact the Department through the use of a Video Phone by calling 860-920-7163.

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

■ A. INTRODUCTION

1. **RFQ Name.** Pre-employment Transition Services Request for Qualifications (PETS_RFQ_020316)
2. **Commodity Codes.** The services that the Department wishes to procure through this RFQ are as follows:
 - 3000: Education and Training
 - 2000: Community and Social Services
 - 1000: Healthcare Services
 - 0600: Services: (Professional, Consulting, Support)

■ B. ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS / DEFINITIONS

AT	Assistive Technology
BRS	Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (CT)
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CT	Connecticut
DAS	Department of Administrative Services (CT)
DORS	Department of Rehabilitation Services (CT)
DSS	Department of Social Services (CT)
EST	Eastern Standard Time
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act (CT)
LOI	Letter of Intent
OAG	Office of the Attorney General (CT)
OPM	Office of Policy and Management (CT)
POS	Purchase of Service
RFQ	Request for Qualifications
SEEC	State Elections Enforcement Commission (CT)
U.S.	United States
PETS	Pre-Employment Transition Services

- *Contractor:* A public/private non-profit or for-profit provider, organization or company that enters into a POS contract with the DORS as a result of this RFQ.
- *Prospective Respondent:* Only organizations that meet or exceed the minimum qualifications are eligible to submit responses to this RFQ, but have not yet done so.
- *Respondent:* Only organizations that meet or exceed the minimum qualifications that have submitted qualifications to the Department in response to this RFQ.
- *Stakeholders.* Any entity invested in the career and education to improve post school outcomes for students with disabilities. Specifically, students/families, school systems, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), State Department of Education (SDE), other state agencies, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Public Health (DPH), Employers, Parent Advocacy organizations, public and private providers, healthcare providers, etc.
- *Transition Community:* Includes students, families, private organizations, schools, state agencies, employers, colleges and universities that are invested in working with students with disabilities ages 16-21. In some way they provide a set of coordinated services, activities, opportunities and or experiences for students, youth and young adults with disabilities to live, learn and work in Connecticut.

■ C. INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Official Contact.** The Department has designated the individual below as the Official Contact for purposes of this RFQ. The Official Contact is the **only authorized contact** for this procurement and, as such, handles all related communications on behalf of the Department. Respondents, prospective Respondents, and other interested parties are advised that any communication with any other Department employee(s) (including appointed officials) or personnel under contract to the Department about this RFQ is strictly prohibited. Respondents or prospective Respondents who violate this instruction may risk disqualification from further consideration.

Name: Marcia McDonough, Contract Administration and Procurement
Address: 55 Farmington Avenue, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-424-5214
Fax: 860-424-5800
E-Mail: Marcia.McDonough@ct.gov

Please ensure that e-mail screening software (if used) recognizes and accepts e-mails from the Official Contact.

- 2. RFQ Information.** The RFQ, addenda to the RFQ and other information as associated with this procurement are available in electronic format from the Official Contact or from the Internet at the following locations:

- Department's RFQ Web Page
- <http://ct.gov/dors/site/default.asp>
- State Contracting Portal
<http://das.ct.gov/Director.aspx?Page=12>

It is strongly recommended that any Respondent or prospective Respondent interested in this procurement subscribe to receive e-mail alerts from the State Contracting Portal. Subscribers will receive a daily e-mail announcing procurements and addenda that are posted on the portal. This service is provided as a courtesy to assist in monitoring activities associated with State procurements, including this RFQ.

Printed copies of all documents are also available from the Official Contact upon request.

- 3. Contract Offers.** The offer of the right to negotiate any contract pursuant to this RFQ is dependent upon the availability of funding to the Department. The Department anticipates the following:

- Total Funding Available: \$4,000,000 in federal funds
- Number of Awards: Multiple
- Contract Term: A two (2) year and five (5) month contract term,
May 1, 2016 - September 30, 2018

- 4. Eligibility.** Eligible Respondents shall be:

- Public/private non-profit or for-profit providers, organizations or companies; or
- School Districts; or
- Accredited Colleges and Universities; or
- Community Colleges; or
- Centers for Independent Living (CILs); or
- Current Contractors of DORS /Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, (DORS/BRS)

Only organizations that meet or exceed the minimum qualifications listed below are qualified to submit responses to this RFQ.

5. Minimum Qualifications of Respondents. To qualify to respond to this RFQ, the Respondent must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- a. Submittal of a required Letter of Intent, as instructed in C. Instructions, 7. Letter of Intent, below.
- b. Completion of [Appendix A](#), the PETS Qualification Form, embedded as a hyperlink.
- c. Experience providing Peer Mentoring Services and/or Self-Advocacy Services and/or, Workplace Readiness Training; and/or Assistive Technology Services.
- d. Forms as required in IV. SUBMISSION OUTLINE, G. Forms.

The Department reserves the right to reject the submission of any Respondent in default of any current or prior contract.

6. Procurement Schedule. See below. Dates after the due date for submissions (“Submissions Due”) are target dates only (*). The Department may amend the schedule, as needed. Any change will be made by means of an amendment to this RFQ and will be posted on the State Contracting Portal and the Department’s RFQ Web Page.

Milestones	Ending Dates
RFQ Released	February 3, 2016
Questions Due 2:00 PM EST	February 17, 2016
Responses to Questions (tentative)	February 24, 2016
Mandatory Letter of Intent (LOI) 2:00 PM EST	March 2, 2016
Submissions Due by 2:00 PM EST	March 23, 2016
Successful Respondent(s) Announced	*TBD
Contract Negotiations Begin (tentative)	*TBD
Contract Begins	May 1, 2016
Contract Ends	September 30, 2018

7. Letter of Intent. Prospective Respondents **are required** to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI is non-binding and does not obligate the sender to submit qualifications. The LOI must be submitted to the Official Contact by U.S. mail, fax, or e-mail by the deadline established in the Procurement Schedule. The LOI must clearly identify the sender, including name, postal address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address. **The LOI must identify the Region or Regions that the Respondent is targeting to deliver PETS.**

Please refer to [CT Map 3](#), embedded as a hyperlink, for identity of regions.

8. Inquiry Procedures. All questions regarding this RFQ or the Department’s procurement process must be submitted to the Official Contact before the deadline specified in the Procurement Schedule. The early submission of questions is

encouraged. Questions will not be accepted or answered verbally – neither in person nor over the telephone. All questions received before the deadline(s) will be answered. However, the Department will not answer questions when the source is unknown (i.e., nuisance or anonymous questions). Questions deemed unrelated to the requirements of the RFQ or the procurement process will not be answered. At its discretion, the Department may or may not respond to questions received after the deadline. This RFQ requires a Letter of Intent and the Department reserves the right to answer questions only from those who have submitted such a letter. The Department may combine similar questions and give only one answer. All questions and answers will be compiled into a written addendum to this RFQ. If any answer to any question constitutes a material change to the RFQ, the question and answer will be placed at the beginning of the addendum and duly noted as such. The agency will release the answers to questions on the date established in the Procurement Schedule. The Department will publish any and all amendments or addenda to this RFQ on the State Contracting Portal and on the Department's RFQ Web Page. At its discretion, the Department may distribute any amendments or addenda to this RFQ to prospective Respondents who submitted a Letter of Intent. **Submissions must include a signed Addendum Acknowledgement, which will be placed at the end of any and all amendments or addenda to this RFQ.**

9. **Submission Due Date and Time.** The Official Contact is the **only authorized recipient** of submissions received in response to this RFQ. Submissions must be received by the Official Contact on or before the due date and time:

- **Due Date:** **March 23, 2016**
- **Time:** **2:00 PM EST**

Hand-delivered submissions shall be delivered to the security desk located in the lobby of the building, at 55 Farmington Avenue. The Official Contact or designee of the Official Contact will be contacted by Security to receive the submission and provide the Respondent or courier with a receipt upon request.

NOTEWORTHY: Submissions ARE NOT DEEMED TO BE RECEIVED by the Department until they are in the hands of the Official Contact or another representative of the Contract Administration and Procurement Unit designated by the Official Contact. Submissions that are received after the stated due date and time are considered to be late and shall not be evaluated. At the discretion of the Department, late submissions may be destroyed or retained for pick-up by the submitters.

An acceptable submission must include the following:

- ✓ **PETS_RFQ_020316**

One (1) original, four (4) conforming copies, and one (1) conforming, identical electronic copy on CD or DVD, which must be compatible with Microsoft Office Word. Flash drives are not acceptable. **This submission should be labeled PETS_RFQ_020316, containing:**

- **[Appendix A](#)**, PETS Qualification Form, embedded as a hyperlink
- Attachments required in Appendix A

The original submission must carry original signatures and be clearly marked on the cover as "Original." Unsigned submissions will not be evaluated. The original submission and each conforming copy of the submission must be complete, properly formatted and outlined, and ready for evaluation by the Evaluation Team. **The electronic copies of the submission must be compatible with Microsoft Office Word except for the Budget, which may be compatible with Microsoft Office Excel.**

For the electronic copy, only the required appendices and forms may be scanned and submitted in Portable Document Format (PDF) or similar file format.

- 10. Multiple Submissions.** The submission of multiple submissions by the same Respondent within a service region is not an option with this procurement. However, a Respondent may submit submissions for more than one service region. **Each service region MUST BE presented as a separate submission.** Each submission shall be self-contained and packaged separately.

■ **D. SUBMISSION FORMAT**

1. **Required Outline.** All submissions must follow the required outline presented in Section IV. Submission Outline. Submissions that fail to follow the required outline will be deemed non-responsive and not evaluated.
2. **Cover Sheet.** The Cover Sheet is Page 1 of the submission, in APPENDIX A. Respondents must complete and use the Cover Sheet form, which is embedded in this RFQ as a hyperlink.
3. **Table of Contents.** All submissions must include a Table of Contents that conforms to the required submission outline. (See Section IV. Submission Outline)
4. **Claim of Exemption from Disclosure.** Respondents are advised that all materials associated with this request, procurement or contract are subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 1-200 *et seq.* (FOIA). Although there are exemptions in the FOIA, they are permissive and not required. If a Respondent believes that certain information or documents or portions of documents required by this request, procurement, or contract is exempt from disclosure under the FOIA, the Respondent must mark such information or documents or portions of documents as EXEMPT. In Section IV. Submission Outline C. of its submission, the Respondent must indicate the documents or pages where the information labeled EXEMPT is located in the submission.

For information or documents so referenced, the Respondent must provide a detailed explanation of the basis for the claim of exemption. Specifically, the Respondent must cite the FOIA exemption that it is asserting as the basis for claim that the marked material is exempt. In addition, the Respondent must apply the language of the statutory exemption to the information or documents or portions of documents that the Respondent is seeking to protect from disclosure. For example, if a Respondent marks a document as a trade secret, the Respondent must parse the definition in section 1-210(b)(5)(A) and show how all of the factors are met. Notwithstanding this requirement, DSS shall ultimately decide whether such information or documents are exempt from disclosure under the FOIA.

5. **Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement.** Respondents shall include a disclosure statement concerning any current business relationships (within the past three (3) years) that pose a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85. A conflict of interest exists when a relationship exists between the Respondent and a public official (including an elected official) or State employee that may interfere with fair competition or may be adverse to the interests of the State. The existence of a conflict of interest is not, in and of itself, evidence of wrongdoing. A conflict of interest may, however, become a legal matter if a Respondent tries to influence, or succeeds in influencing, the outcome of an official decision for its personal or corporate benefit. The Department will determine whether any disclosed conflict of interest poses a substantial advantage to

the Respondent over the competition, decreases the overall competitiveness of this procurement, or is not in the best interests of the State. In the absence of any conflict of interest, a Respondent shall affirm such in the disclosure statement: “[name of Respondent] has no current business relationship (within the past three (3) years) that poses a conflict of interest, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-85.”

- 6. Executive Summary.** Submissions must include a high-level summary of the submission, not exceeding one (1) page.

The Executive Summary, at a minimum, **shall include statements** certifying that the **following minimum submission requirements** have been accomplished by the Respondent:

- a. Completion of [Appendix A](#), the PETS Qualification Form;
- b. The identity of the DORS State Region targeted to provide PETS;

The following hyperlinks are the Regions as defined by DORS and encompass the State of Connecticut in its entirety: [Northern Region](#), [Southern Region](#) and [Western Region](#); and

- c. Experience providing Peer Mentoring Services and/or Self-Advocacy Services and/or, Workplace Readiness Training; and/or Assistive Technology Services.

- 7. Attachments.** Attachments other than the required Appendices or Forms identified in Section IV are not permitted and will not be evaluated. Further, the required Appendices or Forms must not be altered or used to extend, enhance, or replace any component required by this RFQ. Failure to abide by these instructions will result in disqualification.

- 8. Style Requirements.** The original submission and each of the four (4) conforming copies of the original submission must conform to the following specifications:

Binding Type:	Loose leaf binders with the Legal Name of the Respondent and the RFQ Name specified in Section I.A.1 of this RFQ appearing on the outside front cover of each binder
Dividers:	A tab sheet keyed to the table of contents must separate each subsection of the submission; the title of each subsection must appear on the tab sheet
Paper Size:	8½" x 11", "portrait" orientation
Page Limit:	None specified
Print Style:	1-sided
Font Size:	Minimum of 11-point
Font Type:	Arial or Tahoma
Margins:	The binding edge margin of all pages shall be a minimum of one and one half inches (1½"); all other margins shall be one inch (1")
Line Spacing:	Single-spaced

- 9. Pagination.** The Respondent's name must be displayed in the header of each page. All pages, from the Cover Sheet through the required Appendices and Forms, must be numbered consecutively in the footer.

- 10. Packaging and Labeling Requirements.** All submissions must be submitted in sealed envelopes or packages and be addressed to the Official Contact. The Legal Name and Address of the Respondent must appear in the upper left corner of the envelope or package. The RFQ Name must be clearly displayed on the envelope or

package: **RFQ Name. Pre-employment Transition Services Request for Qualifications (PETS_RFQ_020316)**

Any received submission that does not conform to these packaging or labeling instructions will be opened as general mail. Such a submission may be accepted by the Department as a clerical function, but it will not be evaluated. At the discretion of the Department, such a submission may be destroyed or retained for pick-up by the submitters.

■ **E. EVALUATION OF SUBMISSIONS**

- 1. Evaluation Process.** It is the intent of the Department to conduct a comprehensive, fair, and impartial evaluation of submissions received in response to this RFQ. When evaluating submissions, negotiating with the successful Respondent(s), and offering the right to negotiate a contract, the Department will conform to its written procedures for POS procurements (pursuant to C.G.S. § 4-217) and the State's Code of Ethics (pursuant to C.G.S. §§ 1-84 and 1-85).
- 2. Evaluation Team.** The Department will designate an Evaluation Team to evaluate qualifications submitted in response to this RFQ. The contents of all submissions, including any confidential information, will be shared with the Evaluation Team. Only submissions found to be responsive (that is, complying with all instructions and requirements described herein) will be reviewed, rated, and scored. Submissions that fail to comply with all instructions will be rejected without further consideration. Attempts by any Respondent (or representative of any Respondent) to contact or influence any member of the Evaluation Team may result in disqualification of the Respondent.
- 3. Minimum Submission Requirements.** All submissions must comply with the requirements specified in this RFQ. To be eligible for evaluation, submissions must (a) be received on or before the due date and time; (b) meet the Minimum Submission and Submission Format requirements; (c) follow the required Submission Outline; and (d) be complete. Submissions that fail to follow instructions or satisfy these minimum submission requirements will not be reviewed further. The Department will reject any submission that deviates significantly from the requirements of this RFQ.
- 4. Evaluation Criteria (and Weights).** Submissions meeting the Minimum Submission Requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Evaluation Team will use to evaluate the technical merits of the submissions. The criteria are weighted according to their relative importance. The weights are confidential.
 - Qualification Submission, [Appendix A](#)
 - Attachments
- 5. Respondent Selection.** Upon completing its evaluation of submissions, the Evaluation Team will submit the rankings of all submissions to the Department head. The final selection of a successful Respondent is at the discretion of the Department head. Any Respondent selected will be so notified and awarded an opportunity to negotiate a contract with the Department. Such negotiations may, but will not automatically, result in a contract. Any resulting contract will be posted on the State Contracting Portal. All unsuccessful Respondents will be notified by e-mail or U.S. mail, at the Department's discretion, about the outcome of the evaluation and Respondent selection process.

- 6. Debriefing.** After receiving notification of the outcome of the evaluation process from the Department, any Respondent may contact the Official Contact and request a Debriefing of the procurement process and its submission. If Respondents still have questions after receiving this information, they may contact the Official Contact and request a meeting with the Department to discuss the procurement process. The Department shall schedule and conduct Debriefing meetings that have been properly requested, within fifteen (15) days of the Department's receipt of a request. The Debriefing meeting must not include or allow any comparisons of any submissions with other submissions, nor should the identity of the evaluators be released. The Debriefing process shall not be used to change, alter, or modify the outcome of a competitive procurement. More detailed information about requesting a Debriefing may be obtained from the Official Contact.
- 7. Appeal Process.** Any time after the submission due date, but **not later than thirty (30) days** after the Department notifies Respondents about the outcome of a competitive procurement, Respondents may submit an Appeal to the Department. The e-mail sent date or the postmark date on the notification envelope will be considered "day one" of the thirty (30) days. Respondents may appeal any aspect of the Department's competitive procurement; however, such Appeal must be in writing and must set forth facts or evidence in sufficient and convincing detail for the Department to determine whether during any aspect of the competitive procurement there was a failure to comply with the State's statutes, regulations, or standards concerning competitive procurement or the provisions of the RFQ. Any such Appeal must be submitted to the Agency Head with a copy to the Official Contact. The Respondent must include the basis for the Appeal and the remedy requested. The filing of an Appeal shall not be deemed sufficient reason for the Department to delay, suspend, cancel, or terminate the procurement process or execution of a contract. More detailed information about filing an Appeal may be obtained from the Official Contact.
- 8. Contest of Solicitation or Award.** Pursuant to Section 4e-36 of the Connecticut General Statutes, "Any bidder or proposer on a state contract may contest the solicitation or award of a contract to a subcommittee of the State Contracting Standards Board..." More detailed information is available on the State Contracting Standards Board web site at <http://www.ct.gov/scsb/site/default.asp>.
- 9. Contract Execution.** Any contract developed and executed as a result of this RFQ is subject to the Department's contracting procedures, which may include approval by the Office of the Attorney General.

II. MANDATORY PROVISIONS

■ A. STANDARD CONTRACT, PARTS I AND II

By submitting qualifications in response to this RFQ, the Respondent implicitly agrees to comply with the provisions of Parts I and II of the State's "standard contract":

Part I of the standard contract is maintained by the Department and will include the scope of services, contract performance, budget, reports, and program-specific provisions of any resulting contract. A sample of Part I is available from the Department's Official Contact upon request.

Part II of the standard contract is maintained by OPM and includes the mandatory terms and conditions of the contract. Part II is available on OPM's web site at: http://www.ct.gov/opm/fin/standard_contract.

Note:

Included in Part II of the standard contract is the State Elections Enforcement Commission's notice (pursuant to C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2)) advising executive branch State contractors and prospective State contractors of the ban on campaign contributions and solicitations.

Part I of the standard contract may be amended by means of a written instrument signed by the Department, the selected Respondent (contractor), and, if required, the Attorney General's Office. Part II of the standard contract may be amended only in consultation with, and with the approval of, the Office of Policy and Management and the Attorney General's office.

■ B. ASSURANCES

By submitting qualifications in response to this RFQ, a Respondent implicitly gives the following assurances:

- 1. Collusion.** The Respondent represents and warrants that the Respondent did not participate in any part of the RFQ development process and had no knowledge of the specific contents of the RFQ prior to its issuance. The Respondent further represents and warrants that no agent, representative, or employee of the State participated directly in the preparation of the Respondent's submission. The Respondent also represents and warrants that the submission is in all respects fair and is made without collusion or fraud.
- 2. State Officials and Employees.** The Respondent certifies that no elected or appointed official or employee of the State has or will benefit financially or materially from any contract resulting from this RFQ. The Department may terminate a resulting contract if it is determined that gratuities of any kind were either offered or received by any of the aforementioned officials or employees from the Respondent, contractor, or its agents or employees.
- 3. Competitors.** The Respondent assures that the submission is not made in connection with any competitor submitting a separate submission in response to this RFQ. No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the Respondent to induce any competitor to submit, or not submit, qualifications for the purpose of restricting competition.

4. **Validity of Submission.** The Respondent certifies that the submission represents a valid and binding offer to provide services in accordance with the terms and provisions described in this RFQ and any amendments or attachments hereto. The submission shall remain valid for a period of 180 days after the submission due date and may be extended beyond that time by mutual agreement. At its sole discretion, the Department may include the submission, by reference or otherwise, into any contract with the successful Respondent.
5. **Press Releases.** The Respondent agrees to obtain prior written consent and approval of the Department for press releases that relate in any manner to this RFQ or any resultant contract.

■ C. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By submitting qualifications in response to this RFQ, a Respondent implicitly agrees to comply with the following terms and conditions:

1. **Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.** The State is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate in its hiring, employment, or business practices. The State is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services, or activities.
2. **Preparation Expenses.** Neither the State nor the Department shall assume any liability for expenses incurred by a Respondent in preparing, submitting, or clarifying any qualifications submitted in response to this RFQ.
3. **Exclusion of Taxes.** The Department is exempt from the payment of excise and sales taxes imposed by the federal government and the State. Respondents are liable for any other applicable taxes.
4. **Changes to Submission.** No additions or changes to the original submission will be allowed after submission. While changes are not permitted, the Department may request and authorize Respondents to submit written clarification of their submissions, in a manner or format prescribed by the Department, and at the Respondent's expense.
5. **Supplemental Information.** Supplemental information will not be considered after the deadline for submissions, unless specifically requested by the Department. The Department may ask a Respondent to give demonstrations, interviews, oral presentations or further explanations to clarify information contained in a submission. Any such demonstration, interview, or oral presentation will be at a time selected and in a place provided by the Department. At its sole discretion, the Department may limit the number of Respondents invited to make such a demonstration, interview, or oral presentation.
6. **Presentation of Supporting Evidence.** If requested by the Department, a Respondent must be prepared to present evidence of experience, ability, data reporting capabilities, or other information necessary to satisfactorily meet the requirements set forth or implied in this RFQ. At its discretion, the Department may also check or contact any reference provided by the Respondent.

7. **RFQ Is Not An Offer.** Neither this RFQ nor any subsequent discussions shall give rise to any commitment on the part of the State or the Department or confer any rights on any Respondent unless and until a contract is fully executed by the necessary parties. The contract document will represent the entire agreement between the Respondent and the Department and will supersede all prior negotiations, representations or agreements, alleged or made, between the parties. The State shall assume no liability for costs incurred by the Respondent or for payment of services under the terms of the contract until the successful Respondent is notified that the contract has been accepted and approved by the Department and, if required, by the Attorney General's Office.

■ D. RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE STATE

By submitting qualifications in response to this RFQ, a Respondent implicitly accepts that the following rights are reserved to the State:

1. **Timing Sequence.** The timing and sequence of events associated with this RFQ shall ultimately be determined by the Department.
2. **Amending or Canceling RFQ.** The Department reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFQ on any date and at any time, if the Department deems it to be necessary, appropriate, or otherwise in the best interests of the State.
3. **No Acceptable Submissions.** In the event that no acceptable qualifications are submitted in response to this RFQ, the Department may reopen the procurement process, if it is determined to be in the best interests of the State.
4. **Award and Rejection of Submissions.** The Department reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all submissions in whole or in part, for misrepresentation or if the submission limits or modifies any of the terms, conditions, or specifications of this RFQ. The Department may waive minor technical defects, irregularities, or omissions, if in its judgment the best interests of the State will be served. The Department reserves the right to reject the submission of any Respondent who submits qualifications after the submission due date and time.
5. **Sole Property of the State.** All qualifications submitted in response to this RFQ are to be the sole property of the State. Any product, whether acceptable or unacceptable, developed under a contract awarded as a result of this RFQ shall be the sole property of the State, unless stated otherwise in this RFQ or subsequent contract. The right to publish, distribute, or disseminate any and all information or reports, or part thereof, shall accrue to the State without recourse.
6. **Contract Negotiation.** The Department reserves the right to negotiate or contract for all or any portion of the services contained in this RFQ. The Department further reserves the right to contract with one or more Respondent for such services.
7. **Clerical Errors in Award.** The Department reserves the right to correct inaccurate awards resulting from its clerical errors. This may include, in extreme circumstances, revoking the awarding of a contract already made to a Respondent and subsequently awarding the contract to another Respondent. Such action on the part of the State shall not constitute a breach of contract on the part of the State since the contract with the initial Respondent is deemed to be void *ab initio* and of no effect as if no contract ever existed between the State and the Respondent.

■ E. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

By submitting qualifications in response to this RFQ, the Respondent implicitly agrees to comply with all applicable State and federal laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1. Freedom of Information, C.G.S. § 1-210(b).** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) generally requires the disclosure of documents in the possession of the State upon request of any citizen, unless the content of the document falls within certain categories of exemption, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-210(b). Respondents are generally advised not to include in their submissions any confidential information. If the Respondent indicates that certain documentation, as required by this RFQ, is submitted in confidence, the State will endeavor to keep said information confidential to the extent permitted by law. The State has no obligation to initiate, prosecute, or defend any legal proceeding or to seek a protective order or other similar relief to prevent disclosure of any information pursuant to a FOIA request. The Respondent has the burden of establishing the availability of any FOIA exemption in any proceeding where it is an issue. While a Respondent may claim an exemption to the State's FOIA, the final administrative authority to release or exempt any or all material so identified rests with the State. In no event shall the State or any of its employees have any liability for disclosure of documents or information in the possession of the State and which the State or its employees believe(s) to be required pursuant to the FOIA or other requirements of law.

- 2. Contract Compliance, C.G.S. § 4a-60 and Regulations of CT State Agencies § 46a-68j-21 thru 43, inclusive.** CT statute and regulations impose certain obligations on State agencies (as well as contractors and subcontractors doing business with the State) to ensure that State agencies do not enter into contracts with organizations or businesses that discriminate against protected class persons.
IMPORTANT NOTE: The respondent must upload the Workplace Analysis Affirmative Action Report through an automated system hosted by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS)/Procurement Division, and the Department of Rehabilitation Services can review said document online. The [DAS guide to uploading affidavits and nondiscrimination forms online](#) is embedded in this section as a hyperlink.

- 3. Consulting Agreements, C.G.S. § 4a-81.** Submissions for State contracts with a value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, excluding leases and licensing agreements of any value, shall require a consulting agreement affidavit attesting to whether any consulting agreement has been entered into in connection with the submission. As used herein "consulting agreement" means any written or oral agreement to retain the services, for a fee, of a consultant for the purposes of (A) providing counsel to a contractor, vendor, consultant or other entity seeking to conduct, or conducting, business with the State, (B) contacting, whether in writing or orally, any executive, judicial, or administrative office of the State, including any department, institution, bureau, board, commission, authority, official or employee for the purpose of solicitation, dispute resolution, introduction, requests for information or (C) any other similar activity related to such contract. Consulting agreement does not include any agreements entered into with a consultant who is registered under the provisions of C.G.S. Chapter 10 as of the date such affidavit is submitted in accordance with the provisions of C.G.S. § 4a-81. The Consulting Agreement Affidavit (OPM Ethics Form 5) is available on OPM's website at [OPM: Ethics Forms](#)
IMPORTANT NOTE: The respondent must upload the Consulting Agreement Affidavit (OPM Ethics Form 5) through an automated system hosted by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS)/Procurement Division, and the Department of Rehabilitation Services can review said document online. The [DAS guide to uploading affidavits and nondiscrimination forms online](#) is embedded in this section as a hyperlink.

- 4. Gift and Campaign Contributions, C.G.S. §§ 4-250 and 4-252(c); Governor M. Jodi Rell's Executive Orders No. 1, Para. 8 and No. 7C, Para. 10; C.G.S. § 9-612(g)(2).** If a respondent is offered an opportunity to negotiate a contract with an anticipated value of \$50,000 or more in a calendar or fiscal year, the respondent must fully disclose any gifts or lawful contributions made to campaigns of candidates for statewide public office or the General Assembly. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The gift and campaign contributions certification (OPM Ethics Form 1) is available on OPM's website at [OPM: Ethics Forms](#)
IMPORTANT NOTE: The selected respondent(s) must upload the Gift and Campaign Contributions Certification (OPM Ethics Form 1) through an automated system hosted by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS)/Procurement Division prior to contract execution, and the Department of Rehabilitation Services can review said document online. The [DAS guide to uploading affidavits and nondiscrimination forms online](#) is embedded in this section as a hyperlink.
- 5. Nondiscrimination Certification, C.G.S. §§ 4a-60(a)(1) and 4a-60a(a)(1).** If a respondent is offered an opportunity to negotiate a contract, the respondent must provide the Department with *written representation or documentation* that certifies the respondent complies with the State's nondiscrimination agreements and warranties. A nondiscrimination certification is required for all State contracts – regardless of type, term, cost, or value. Municipalities and CT State agencies are exempt from this requirement. The nondiscrimination certification forms are available on OPM's website at [OPM: Nondiscrimination Certification](#)
IMPORTANT NOTE: The selected respondent(s) must upload the Nondiscrimination Certification through an automated system hosted by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS)/Procurement Division prior to contract execution, and the Department of Rehabilitation Services can review said document online. The [DAS guide to uploading affidavits and nondiscrimination forms online](#) is embedded in this section as a hyperlink.
- 6. [Certification Regarding Lobbying](#), (embedded as a hyperlink) - To submit a responsive submission, **THE RESPONDENT SHALL** provide a signed statement to the effect that no funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.**

III. PROGRAM INFORMATION

■ A. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) contains thirteen (13) distinct programs, including two Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs. The general VR program, situated within DORS Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), serves individuals with all types of disabilities except those with the primary disability of legal blindness. Consumers that are legally blind are served by the state VR program for the Blind, which is housed within the Department's Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB). Consumers who are legally blind and deaf or hard of hearing are served by either BRS or BESB.

The Department provides a broad range of services to persons with disabilities, families and individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. By statute, the Department is the State agency responsible for administering a number of programs under federal legislation, including the Rehabilitation Act, the Assistive Technology Act and the Social Security Act.

The Department is headed by the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services. The Department administers services that are delivered on a statewide basis with central office support located in Hartford.

Department Mission

The Department's mission is to maximize opportunities for people in Connecticut with disabilities to live, learn and work independently.

B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which took effect on July 22, 2014, mandates States to reserve funds for the sole purpose of providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) for all students with disabilities that are potentially eligible for public Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Respondents are recommended to review the following resources and to incorporate inherent principles into their responses:

- A. Guideposts for Success as outlined in National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD). <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/guideposts>
- B. CORE Transition Skills found on the SERC website <http://www.ctserc.org/>.
- C. Transition Guideposts (TGP) relevant to the Self-Advocacy program include: [Guidepost 3 - Youth Development & Leadership](#), [Guidepost 4 - Connecting Activities](#) and [Guidepost 5 - Family Involvement and Supports](#);
- D. Building a Bridge from School to Adult Life for Young Adults with Disabilities in Connecticut. <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/BuildingABridge.pdf>

- E. Stepping Forward: A Self-Advocacy Guide for Middle and High School Students.
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/special/steppingforward_self_advocacy_guide_for_middle_and_high_school_students.pdf
- F. The Best Practices Guide in Mentoring Youth with Disabilities
<http://www.pyd.org/editor/images/Best-Practices-Guide-With-Graphics.pdf>

The overall intent of the PETS initiative is to improve the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities in the areas of competitive employment, post-secondary education and independent living. DORS seeks to achieve this through the statewide provision of required services in various settings including schools, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholder locations/facilities. Through this procurement DORS is seeking to develop capacity to provide two (2) of the required PETS:

1. Instruction in Self-Advocacy, which may include peer mentoring; and
2. Workplace Readiness Training for the development of social skills and independent living.

In recognition of the unique capacity necessary for prospective contractors to provide the various aspects of these global categories of services, the Department has divided these two (2) required services into four (4) distinct components. Respondents may elect to submit qualifications and propose to provide any one (1) single and up to all four (4) of the following components:

1. Instruction in Self-Advocacy;
2. Peer Mentoring Services;
3. Workplace Readiness Training for the development of social skills; and
4. Assistive Technology (AT) Services

The Provision of the Pre-Employment Transition Services listed below are preferred to be provided through direct in person individual and/or group support. Responses proposing these services being facilitated online or via mobile application will be considered.

1. Instruction in Self-Advocacy

This program or distinct set of services will have the overarching goal of equipping students with the skills necessary to actively direct their lives in school, the community and the workplace. Self-Advocacy Instruction should be designed to increase students' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as individuals with disabilities. Instruction and services should also focus on increasing students' understanding of how their functional limitations may impose barriers in various settings and increasing their self-awareness.

Proposed Instruction in Self-Advocacy should include, but not be limited to, the following set of coordinated activities and objectives:

- Assist students to identify resources within their family, community and school system to help prepare for employment, education and training.
- Provide experiences to promote students' personal and professional development through a coordinated set of activities designed to offer

exposure to appropriate decision-making and conflict resolution techniques.

- Assist students to identify their strengths, areas of need, and preferences while positioning them to develop and request disability related accommodations.
- Assist students to acquire a detailed understanding of the procedural steps necessary to formally request accommodations and supports in postsecondary education, the community, school and the workplace.
- Instruct students to acquire the skills necessary to request accommodations and supports in postsecondary education/ training, the community, and the workplace which may include: healthcare management, time management, public benefits, adult service systems and Personal Care Assistance (PCA).
- Assist students to identify their rights and responsibilities as a consumer, student, job seeker, employee, and tax payer.
- Determine the need for student exposure to AT services and/or devices.

2. Peer Mentoring Services

Peer Mentoring Services will have an overarching goal of equipping students with the skills necessary to actively direct their lives in school, the community and the workplace. Peer Mentoring must include comprehensive mentoring services for students aimed toward the development of appropriate social skills, self-advocacy skills, leadership, self-awareness, disability awareness and/or self-esteem. Peer Mentoring Services must provide opportunities, activities and experiences to practice these skills in the least restrictive environment.

Proposed Peer Mentoring Services should include but not be limited to the following set of coordinated activities and objectives:

- Develop and implement a communication schedule and methodology that will facilitate individual and/or group support online, via mobile application, in the community, in high school, in college, or on an employment site. Before, during or after school hours.
- Provide a "Peer Mentor" for a student with a similar disability, language or culture, education or educational track, career/ employment interests, employment, or community location.
- Assist students to identify activities, experiences and opportunities that will increase their competencies in the areas of self-advocacy and leadership.

3. Workplace Readiness Training

Workplace Readiness Training will have the overarching goal of assisting students to identify and resolve barriers that may inhibit their future employment and/or education. These services should be designed to provide instruction and practice to develop the appropriate skills required to seek,

acquire and maintain competitive employment, including the development of social and independent living skills. These services should also assist students to determine an appropriate balance between striving for independence and seeking support/accommodations.

Proposed Workplace Readiness Training should include but not be limited to the following set of coordinated activities and objectives:

- Develop and/or utilize existing screening instruments to gauge consumers' workplace readiness to move forward in pursuing competitive employment. When barriers are identified that require pre-employment skills training, the contractor will deliver, document and analyze the effectiveness of tools and techniques to assist consumers.
- Provide Financial Capability training for students to acquire, develop and/or improve money management skills.
- Exploration of available, affordable and accessible transportation options, including travel training.
- Determine the need for AT services to promote students' success.

4. Assistive Technology Services

Assistive Technology Services will have the overarching goal of introducing students to and increasing their use of Assistive Technology (AT) devices. Students should be exposed to devices that may assist them to access curriculum, increase independence and to reduce barriers in school, in the community and at work. This service should be provided primarily as a service to groups through hands-on presentations/demonstrations, with the opportunity for students to interact with and utilize devices.

Assistive Technology Services should include but not be limited to the following set of coordinated activities and objectives:

- Expose students to Assistive Technology devices that may increase access and full participation in education, work, community life and other post-graduation opportunities.
- Assist students to explore various funding options to obtain and/or upgrade AT devices used for education or employment.
- Promote the use of Assistive Technology devices for participation in postsecondary education in high demand jobs and careers, including Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM).
- Promote coordination between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Lead Education Agency (LEA) for services provided under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and PETS.

IV. SUBMISSION OUTLINE

This section presents the **required** outline that must be followed when submitting qualifications in response to this RFQ. Submissions must include a Table of Contents that exactly conforms to the required submission outline (below). Submissions must include all the components listed below, in the order specified, using the prescribed lettering and numbering scheme. Incomplete submissions will not be evaluated.

	Page
A. Cover Sheet	1.
B. Table of Contents	2.
C. Claim of Exemption from Disclosure.	3.
D. Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Statement	etc.
E. Executive Summary	
F. Qualification Submission	

Appendix A: Part I, Organizational Program Plan and Part II, Program Structure and Scope Requirements

G. Forms	
1. Department	
a. Addendum Acknowledgement.	
b. Certification Regarding Lobbying	
c. Required affidavits uploaded to BizNet on the DAS website:	
1) Workplace Analysis Affirmative Action Report and	
2) Consulting Agreement Affidavit (OPM Ethics Form 5)	

H. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1, Resumes and/or Job Descriptions