MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE
RFP NUMBER SSA/MRSS-22-001-S
MOBILE RESPONSE STABILIZATION SERVICES

Via Google Meet

Thursday, April 14, 2022
1:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE:

AGENCY:

   Edwina Whipple, Procurement Officer, DHS/SSC
   Valerie Douglas, Executive Project Director, DHS/SSC
   Nicole Cameron, Project Director, Center for Excellence in Foster Care & Development
   Nneka Willis-Gray, Director, Procurement Division
   Aretha Ector, Assistant Attorney General
   Dapheny McCray
   LaTanya Lowe
   Chandra Miller
ATTENDEES:
Sarah Drennan, Frederick County Health Department
Jay Hessler, Frederick County Health Department
Latonia Laffitte, Bridges Wellness Group
Cedric Tucker, Building Communities Today for Tomorrow

ALSO ATTENDING:
Kenisha Reed, Procurement Department

 Reported by: Carol O’Brocki, Notary Public
           Hunt Reporting Company
PROCEEDINGS

(1:03 p.m.)

MS. WHIPPLE: Welcome to the Pre-Proposal Conference for Mobile Response Stabilization Services or MRSS, RFP Number SSA/MRSS-22-001-S, and I would like to welcome you to the Pre-Proposal Conference and also I’ll start by introducing myself, Edwina Whipple. I’m the procurement officer for this solicitation.

And I’d like to introduce my director of Procurement -- of the Procurement Division, Nneka Willis-Gray, and also the Assistant Attorney General Aretha Ector, and all of the other State employees will introduce themselves as we proceed. Those on the agenda, they’ll introduce themselves.

And I also need to let everyone know that the Pre-Proposal Conference is being recorded. So I will start by going through the -- oh, I’m sorry. I’ll start -- actually the opening remarks will be read by Valerie Douglas.

MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you so much, Edwina. So, good afternoon. My name is Valerie Douglas and I am
the executive project director at the Department of Human Services, Social Services Administration.

I’m one of the persons who are responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Center for Excellence in Foster Care and Development grant under which mobile response stabilization services will be provided.

Nicole Cameron is the Center for Excellence project director who is on the call as well today, also joining us in this conversation and I’d like to have Nicole introduce herself.

MS. CAMERON: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for your interest in being here. My name is Nicole Cameron, project director for the Center for Excellence and we’re excited to have you guys part of this important conversation.

MS. DOUGLAS: Yes. So, thank you, Nicole, and yes, we are very, very happy that you are interested in the MRSS and are here today to hear more about this very transformative process.

It will support resource families, parents, and children who are served in our child welfare
system. I’ll share more information on this process as we move into our agenda, but for now I just wanted to say thank you so much for being here. We look forward to sharing as much information as possible and gaining your additional interest in the process.

    Edwina, I’ll turn it over to you.

    MS. WHIPPLE: I will now be going over the Key Information Summary Sheet and it is a part of your Request for Proposal. If you did not receive one, you can access eMMA by going to emma.maryland.gov, and you can download it, or you can also email me at edwina.whipple@maryland.gov and I can email you a copy of the RFP.

    So I have already identified that I am the procurement officer and this is for Mobile Response Stabilization Services. I’ve given you my email address.

    Questions -- the question due date and time is April 25th, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. The proposal due closing date is May 17th, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

    The contract type is a fixed price with
indefinite quantity. The contract duration is one year -- is a one-year base period with a one-year renewal option, and the primary place of performance will be proposed or is as proposed by the offeror.

In Section 1 of the RFP, Minimum Qualifications, there is no offeror minimum qualification for this procurement, and I will be followed by Valerie Douglas with the next section.

MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you, Edwina. So I’d like to start by providing a little background information on the Center for Excellence model for which the mobile response stabilization services will be provided under.

So in September of 2019 the Federal Children’s Bureau awarded the Maryland Department of Human Services Social Service Administration funding to create a National Center for Excellence in Foster Family Development. The only state, by the way, in the country who has been awarded this grant.

And so the purpose of the CFE is to engage, prepare, and support resource parents to support timely unification, permanency, and family-based placements.
So the CFE aims to improve the well-being of children and families impacted by child welfare system by reducing lengths of stay in foster care and in congregate care placements, decrease in the rate of reentry into foster care, and increasing unification and exits to permanency.

There are five jurisdictions who were selected to implement and pilot this model. The five jurisdictions include Baltimore County, Carroll County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George’s County.

So as a part of the model there are three main supports that make up the CFE model. Two of those models are evidence-based practices that supports and provides pure training and build skills for the resource parents and that’s considered the key for keeping resource parents and kinship parents training and supported, and the acronym for that is KEEP (phonetic) and then PTCR, which is the Parent Training for Resources and Unification which is a support program for our bio-families.
And the whole premise of the Center for Excellence is really to have the resource parents and birth parents co-parent and work on on behalf of our youth who in care.

The MRSS is another main component of our model and its component really is very critical in normalizing the challenging behaviors and experiences of both the child and the resource parent. It is mainly upon initial placement and here about the MRSS is slightly different from the mental health stabilization process.

Mobile response stabilization is a process that is built on -- ensures stability at the point of placement, at the point that a child is placed in a resource home. There’s a response time of within an hour and it has basic components that is also a model that is considered to be evidence-based, as well.

So the MRS includes two primary components. The first component is mobile crisis response services. These services are provided in person and delivered in home or in a community setting. The contractor who is
offered the bid will deploy a team of two persons within one hour of services and within a 72-hour time period provide those crisis management services.

The second component is really built on stability. So the first part is about responding in a crisis or crisis-like situation, and we consider a child who has been removed from their home one who has experienced trauma. So based on the fact that a child has been removed, we’re offering through the MRSS support services for that youth and that resource parent.

The stabilization services is the second component and it’s a component that is provided up to eight weeks, and the determination of how long those stabilization services are in play is really built on that first three -- that three-day time period within that crisis period, the first component of the MRSS.

And those services are provided just to support the resource parent and the child during that time period, and as I mentioned earlier it could be eight weeks but it could be shorter depending on what
the assessment period has determined and that
assessment is done by the MRSS team.

So that section -- the Scope of Work section
of the RFP as you will see or have seen is very
lengthy. So I don’t want to go through all of the
details of the Scope of Work but I do want to bring
your attention to a section that is really critical and
that is the Staffing section of the RFP.

There are credential expectations based on
the team who will need to provide the services, the
amount of staff needed because this would be a 24/7
operation and, you know, the availability of staff
based on that time period.

The credentialing, there would need to be at
least one LICSW or LCPAC who is available and part of
that team at the time.

I’m going to stop there and see if Nicole,
you want to chime in and maybe pull out of other
critical parts of the Scope of Work?

MS. CAMERON: Not a critical part, I just
want to make sure for those on the call that resource
parents were formally known as foster parents, just in
the event that someone may not have known that. So I
just wanted to point that out.

MS. WHIPPLE: That’s correct. So the Center
for Excellence it was -- is a grant. The application
was for a resource -- it was for foster families but in
the State of Maryland we consider foster parents -- we
consider them as resource parents because we also
include kin parents in that definition of resource
parents. So thank you for that clarification.

MS. CAMERON: No problem. I just wanted to
make sure I shared that. Thank you Valerie.

MS. DOUGLAS: You’re welcome. So, Edwina,
I’ll hand it back over to you.

MS. WHIPPLE: The next section will be --
Dapheny will be discussing. Okay. Dapheny? Okay. Is
she muted or --

MS. MCCRAY: I’m sorry, Edwina. If we could
move to Section 4 and then I will come back -- we can
come back to Section 3. I’m on the line with the court
reporter now.
MS. WHIPPLE: Okay. All right. Section 3, Procurement Instruction. So in the RFP if you will just review that particular section and it will give you more information about procurement instructions.

Two of the sections that I really want to point out and give special emphasis to -- 4.2 regarding eMaryland Marketplace Advantage (eMMA), which is the electronic commerce system that we use for the State of Maryland. This section will give you more information about what you need to do to become -- to actually sign up on eMMA regarding contract award and being registered in eMMA.

So just give that special attention as well as Section 4.3 which regards questions -- information about questions. And I will now be followed by Chandra or LaTanya regarding the SBR goal.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Edwina.

Just to speak on the Small Business Reserve portion of the scope of work, that basically just entails that vendors who -- the procurement itself is a Small Business Reserve designated procurement which means
that only awards can go to vendors who are Small Business Reserve certified. So it’s not a goal; it’s a designation, and that’s basically the summary of it.

So for vendors to bid on the award they don’t necessarily have to be SBR certified but by the time of award they have to be deemed eligible and already certified before that award can happen.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And if you need information on how to be SBR certified please do feel free to go to eMMA and make sure that you are registered there, and within eMMA there are a series of questions that you can answer in order to be self-certified (indiscernible).

Edwina, that’s it.

MS. WHIPPLE: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Section 6 is Evaluation and Selection Process. That is the section in your RFP that basically gives you information about how --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I’m sorry, Edwina. Before you go on to that, if we’re finished with the Scope of Work let me see if we have any questions
regarding the Scope of Work section -- Section 2.

MS. WHIPPLE: Questions -- so we want to take questions now or --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, for the Scope of Work portion. Then you can go into how proposals are submitted and the deadlines and things like that.

MS. WHIPPLE: Okay. All right. Do if we have anyone who has questions? And if you do, please state your name and the company that you’re with before you ask your question.

(No response.)

MS. WHIPPLE: No questions? Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If I could add something, Aretha, if that’s okay. We mentioned about the license credentialing and I want to make sure we also add the importance of being knowledgeable or certified in trauma informed care. So I know that’s in the Scope in Section 2, so I just didn’t want to miss an opportunity to make sure that the importance of that -- that need. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And for the record
since this is just being recorded, if there are
potential vendors on the line can you please identify
yourselves and the name of your company so we can make
sure that you are certainly included in any transcript
that may be produced from this. I don’t know if our
court reporter is available.

But any other information, then you would
certainly have access to that information.

MS. LAFFITTE: My name is Latonia Laffitte.

I’m with the Bridges Wellness Group.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. And if you
can maybe just drop that in the comments --

MS. LAFFITTE: Sure.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- for us that would be
helpful and put down your email address.

MS. WHIPPLE: Well, if we don’t have anyone
else I can just go back and -- for Section 4.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I see an
individual, Hessler (phonetic). Is that individual
with the Department?

MR. HESSLER: Yes, I’m sorry. My name’s Jay
Hessler. I’m with the Frederick County Health Department, local (indiscernible).

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Again, if you could just drop that in the comments. Sarah Drennan?

MS. DRENNAN: Hi. I’m with Jay. I’ll put my info there, too.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

MS. DRENNAN: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Cedric Tucker?


UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. If you would just drop that information in the comments. And I see another phone number ending with 58. I’m not sure who that is.

MS. REED: Kinesha Reed (phonetic). Hello.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And if you can identify the company that you’re with and drop that in the comments for us that would be helpful.

MS. REED: Give me one second. I’m working
from my phone. I’m not at a laptop. I’m with the
Procurement Department.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. That’s
perfectly fine. And then the young lady who just
joined, Carol? If you would identify yourself and your
company, please? And you’re on mute.

THE REPORTER: I am muted? Oh, yes. I’m
sorry. I’m Carol from Hunt Reporting Company. I was
just told to get on here so here I am. Could you tell
me which State agency this is? I didn’t receive any
information.

MS. WHIPPLE: Department of Human Services.

THE REPORTER: Okay. Thank you.

MS. WHIPPLE: And, Aretha, should I stop
recording now, or continue?

MS. ECTOR: Continue.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you. And
-- okay so you can go on, Edwina. If there are no
other questions from anybody at this point?

MS. WHIPPLE: Anyone else have questions?

(No response.)
MS. WHIPPLE: Okay. I will go back and address Section 4. Section 4 is in -- again in the RFP. It is the Procurement Instructions and if you will just make sure that you review that and I will move on to Section 6 then, the Evaluation and Selection Process. You will also want to review that section of the RFP.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think somebody needs to mute, Edwina.

MS. WHIPPLE: Can someone mute? I think we’re hearing some noise in the background. Thank you. And again we will ask if anyone has any questions. I just want to state that again you need to provide your name and the name of your company when you’re asking questions. And I’ll also let you know that questions will be answered.

You have a question and answer deadline that I provided. It is April 25th. So you have to make sure that -- well, you definitely will have an answer. So get all questions in before April 25th, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. So, questions?
(No response.)

MS. WHIPPLE: If there are no questions then I can open the floor up for any closing comments that anyone has, and just have to remind everyone that proposals are due by May 17th, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

Any closing comments, anyone?

MS. MCRAY: Yes, Edwina.

MS. WHIPPLE: Yes?

MS. MCRAY: Yes. Hi. I did want to cover the Section 3, Contractor Requirements General. I think that’s something that we need to convey that information during the Pre-Proposal Conference. Before I do that, though, I would like to also add -- piggyback off of Edwina’s comments about the due date of the proposals and the time.

Please understand that late proposals will not be accepted. And just to follow on based on the contract requirements of the Scope of Work which Valerie just conveyed earlier, then I’ll move on to the Contractor Requirements General just to highlight some areas that we like the vendors to, you know,
(indiscernible) and one of those sections is Contractor Initiation Requirements regarding the kickoff meeting that will be within ten days of the notice to proceed date.

Another section is the End of Contract Transition, Disaster Recovery Data, Invoicing, Insurance Requirements, Security Requirements, Problem Escalation Procedure, and Experience and Personnel.

So those are some of the key areas in addition to the entire solicitation that we’re asking that the vendors do pay close attention to.

That’s all I have, Edwina.

MS. WHIPPLE: Okay. Thank you, Dapheny.

MS. MCCRAY: Uh-huh. Are there any questions for me from any of the attendees?

(No response.)

MS. MCCRAY: Okay. If not, I’ll turn it over to you, Edwina.

MS. WHIPPLE: Okay. I opened it up for closing comments and I don’t think anyone had any, so if everybody’s good we can adjourn.
MS. DOUGLAS: So before we adjourn I just want to say again we appreciate those of you that have come to hear about MRSS today. This is a model program for the State of Maryland. We are very excited about it and are looking forward to the model that is one -- piloted in the State of Maryland but eventually used across the country.

And so this is the beginning part of this process and we’re really looking forward to implementing this process in a way that it changes how we do business in the State of Maryland and also in the country.

So I wanted to share that information about the MRSS which is a part of our model (indiscernible). So, thank you.

MS. MCCRAY: Oh, and one other point, too, I would like to mention that we do have Carol who’s our transcriber. The court reporting company did apologize for the confusion. So in addition to the recording she will transcribe what’s been recording in addition to what she’s transcribed already. That will be returned

HUNT REPORTING COMPANY
Court Reporting and Litigation Support
Serving Maryland, Washington, and Virginia
410-766-HUNT (4868)
1-800-950-DEPO (3376)
back out for review. That’s all I had, for real this

time.

MS. WHIPPLE: Well, if that is all, we can

adjourn.

MS. MCCRAY: All right. Thank you, Carol.

Thank you, everyone.

(At 1:28 p.m. the conference concluded.)
CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY

I, Carol O’Brocki, Notary Public, before whom the foregoing testimony was taken, do hereby certify that the witness was duly sworn by me; that said testimony is a true record of the testimony given by said witness; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action; and that the testimony was reduced to typewriting by me or under my direction.

This certification is expressly withdrawn upon the disassembly or photocopying of the foregoing transcript, including exhibits, unless disassembly or photocopying is done under the auspices of Hunt Reporting Company, and the signature and original seal is attached thereto.

______________________________
CAROL O’BROCKI, Notary Public
in and for the State of Maryland

My Commission Expires: January 15, 2023