



Peer Personnel Preparation – RFP# 13-4127
RFP Questions and Answers
Mandatory Bidders Conferences: January 23 & January 30, 2014

Question 1: *As I understand the RFP, the training will only be paid for if the peer goes to work. Training of peers who do not go to work will not be reimbursed. Your language says “may” so I’m wondering if this is the case. Can you clarify?*

Answer: The Proposer will be responsible for training a sufficient number of individuals to meet the county’s and/or Community Based Organization’s (CBO) identified needs. If the Proposer is unsuccessful in whole or in part, in meeting those needs, OSHPD may prorate payment based on the percentage of positions that are filled with Peer Personnel who have successfully completed the educational or training program. If the Proposer fails to fill at least one third of the identified positions with Peer Personnel who have successfully completed the educational or training program they shall be deemed a breach of contract at which time OSHPD may require them to repay all funds received.

Question 2: *Under Purpose and Funding section, B # 3; it says, “Individuals with health or mental health education and/or experience who can address cultural, diversity, and language proficiency needs of the county(ies)’ Public Mental health System. This appears to open the pool of people trained to as peer personnel to professionals, who may not have a lived experience of recovery which they embrace. Is this correct?”*

Answer: No. For purposes of this RFP, “Peer Personnel” is defined as clients of the Public Mental Health System and family members of such clients. In addition, Section III in the Progress Report of Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 requires that the training include “using the Peer Personnel’s lived experience in direct service provision.”

Question 3: *Under Purpose and Funding section, C # 2; it says, “The mental health educational or training program shall be no longer than one academic year or nine consecutive months in length.” Is this referencing only the peer certification training or is it also referencing the additional component of C # 5 that states, “ Successful completion of the program will enable immediate entry into an identified position of need in the Public Mental Health System workforce as well as encourage career progression through college and post-graduate education.”*

Answer: Section C(2) of the RFP does not reference peer certification training; rather it references only the length of the training program. Section C(5) states that successful training completion of the training shall be sufficient to satisfy the minimum qualifications for entry into positions of need in the Public Mental Health System.

Question 4: *Is it correct to assume that continuing education does not fall within the parameters of nine months duration?*

Answer: The mental health education and/or training program shall be no longer than one academic year or nine months in length. The Proposer shall provide a counseling program that assists participants to develop an individualized career plan that includes short and long-term goals for entering, re-entering or advancing in the public mental health workforce.

Question 5: *Under Purpose and Funding section, D # 2; it says, “If program participants are unsuccessful in gaining and or maintaining employment in positions identified in the Eligibility [sic] section, Paragraph A due to insufficient skills, the Contractor(s) shall: i. Demonstrate that such program participants will be providing retraining that addresses their skill deficiency. ii If program participants are not retrained as required in Paragraph E(2)(i), the Contractor(s) shall provide detailed explanation for the inability of contractor to provide the required training.”*

- *Who decides that people have insufficient skills and are not just unable to do the work?*
- *What tool will be used to measure this so that it is standard across all Contractors?*
- *If someone does not demonstrate the desire to do the work (as some people discover only after they begin working in the field...in any profession), why would we force them to retrain?*
- *What if they did not want to retrain, even if their skills were not being demonstrated well?*
- *What would happen if they do not have the skills to do a particular job, that is unique to a particular setting, and the employer did not orient them well? Would the Contractor be held accountable for something outside their control?*

Answer: This is a multi-part question and is answered as such below.

First bullet: *Who decides that people have insufficient skills and are not just unable to do the work?*

Answer: The training program and the employer are expected to work together to decide whether the individual(s) have sufficient skills and/or are able to do the work. The Proposer must provide “a career counseling program that assists participants develop an individualized career plan that includes short- and long-term goals for entering, re-entering or advancing in the public mental health workforce” and to provide “assistance to apply, attend and complete one or more existing courses of study or training programs.” It is expected that the career counseling program will work with employers to ensure that the employers’ requirements are part of the training program, that it will not prepare an individual for a position they do not want or for which they are not suited and that the Proposer will provide program participants appropriate supports to assist them in completing the necessary training.

Second bullet: *What tool will be used to measure this so that it is standard across all Contractors?*

Answer: Section V of the Progress Report for FY 2015-16 provides an employer survey asking employers whether or not program participants were well-prepared for their position.

Third bullet: *If someone does not demonstrate the desire to do the work (as some people discover only after they begin working in the field...in any profession), why would we force them to retrain?*

Answer: There is no obligation on the part of the Proposer to “force” an individual to retrain. The Proposer is expected to provide “a career counseling program that assists participants develop an individualized career plan that includes short- and long-term goals for entering, re-entering or advancing in the public mental health workforce” and to provide “assistance to apply, attend and complete one or more existing courses of study or training programs.” It is expected that the career counseling program will work with employers to ensure that the employers’ requirements are part of the training program, that it will not prepare an individual for a position they do not want or for which they are not suited and that the Proposer will provide program participants appropriate supports to assist them in completing the necessary training.

If, despite the appropriate supports provided, the program participants are not successful in gaining and/or maintaining employment in identified positions, the Proposer shall demonstrate that these program participants will be provided retraining or if the program participants are not retrained, the Proposer shall provide a detailed explanation as to why the Proposer was unable to provide the required training.

Fourth bullet: *What if they did not want to retrain, even if their skills were not being demonstrated well?*

Answer: If the program participants do not want to be retrained, the Proposer shall provide a detailed explanation as to why the Proposer was unable to provide the required training.

Fifth bullet: *What would happen if they do not have the skills to do a particular job, that is unique to a particular setting, and the employer did not orient them well? Would the Contractor be held accountable for something outside their control?*

Answer: The Proposer’s career counseling program and the employer are expected to work together to ensure that the individual(s) have sufficient skills, are able to do the work, and are oriented appropriately. If, despite the appropriate supports provided, the program participants are not successful in gaining and/or maintaining employment in identified positions, the Proposer shall demonstrate that these program participants will be provided retraining or if the program participants are not retrained, the Proposer shall provide a detailed explanation as to why the Proposer was unable to provide the required training.

Question 6: *Is it possible to bid on two locations, understanding that only one location would be awarded?*

Answer: Yes, a Proposer may bid on multiple locations.

Question 7: *What type of educational setting is anticipated for the one year (9 months) academic training? e.g., university based, training academy?*

Answer: The educational setting may include a County-based training program, a dedicated training program, and/or a Community-Based Organization.

Question 8: *Is a hybrid online and in person curriculum acceptable?*

Answer: Yes, a hybrid online and in-person curriculum is acceptable if it enables an individual to satisfy the minimum requirements for entry into a position of need in the County and/or CBO as verified by the County Mental Health Director.

Question 9: *What percent of Webinar courses require in person attendance?*

Answer: The type of education/training that must be provided is not specified. The education and training must enable an individual to satisfy the minimum requirements for entry into position of need the County and/or CBO identified as verified by the County Mental Health Director.

Question 10: *How long are participants obligated to stay employed in the public mental health system after graduation? e.g., is it one year payback in full time employment for one year stipend award? Currently CalSWEC honors whatever amount of hours an agency determines to be full time, eg., 32 hours.*

Answer: The payback time is not specified. However, the purpose of the RFP is to recruit and retain Peer Personnel in identified entry-level positions. The Proposer will be expected to evaluate the Peer Personnel program. That evaluation report will highlight any successes and/or challenges faced in meeting the deliverables.

Question 11: *What the pay back look like? Where can they work? What is definition of "qualifying employment"? For example, per MHSA is it with voluntary consumers, in a county or county behavioral health funded agency?*

Answer: The RFP does not specify a payback for the participants; it obligates the Proposer to place program participants in the County Public Mental Health System (PMHS). Qualifying employment is employment in the County PMHS. The County PMHS is defined in Title 9, California Code of Regulations as publicly-funded mental health programs/services and entities that are administered, in whole or in part, by the County Department of Mental Health.

Question 12: *In a CBO, does employment have to be in the funded service or is it sufficient for the agency to be funded?*

Answer: Employment does not have to be in the funded service. If the agency is administered in whole or in part by the County Department of Mental Health through a contractual relationship, it is a qualifying agency.

Question 13: *Can volunteering be used as payback?*

Answer: The RFP does not specify a payback for the participants; it obligates the Proposer to place program participants in the County Public Mental Health System (PMHS). Employment can be paid or non-paid.

Question 14: *What happens to the amount of fund if they drop out of course or drop out of the program? [Currently with the CalSWEC MHSA stipends, if someone drops out, they go into immediate payback]*

Answer: Funding is based on the total number of identified positions of need that are filled with Peer Personnel who have successfully completed the education or training program. OSHPD may prorate payment based on the percentage of positions that are filled with Peer Personnel who have successfully completed the educational or training program. If the Proposer fails to fill at least one third of the identified positions with Peer Personnel who have successfully completed the educational or training program they shall be deemed a breach of contract at which time OSHPD may require them to repay all funds received.

Question 15: *Can currently employed PSS be included in the education?*

Answer: Yes, the Proposer may propose retaining currently employed Peer Specialists (PSS) by including them in education and/or training.

Question 16: *Should or may current Peer Personal staff be included in the development of the curriculum?*

Answer: Yes, Peer Personnel staff may be included in the development of the curriculum.

Question 17: *What if they are not successful in academic training? [Note: CalSWEC has been diligent in identifying issues and providing supports for individuals to get through their academic goals. This may be the approach here, also]*

Answer: The Proposer is expected to provide appropriate supports to Peer Personnel through retraining and through the career counseling program that will assist participants develop an individualized career plan that includes short-term and long-term goals for entering, re-entering or advancing in the public mental health workforce. The Proposer shall also provide program participants with assistance in applying, attending and completing one or more existing courses of study or training programs. If program participants are not successful in the training program despite the appropriate supports provided, the Proposer shall demonstrate that they provided

retraining that addresses those participants' skill deficiency. The Proposer shall use the "Successes and Lessons Learned" in Attachment VII to document any issues the Proposer has identified in hiring Peer Personnel and/or assisting Peer Personnel secure employment.

Question 18: *What if they don't like to be employed in public mental health? Does this program allow optional employment?*

Answer: This RFP is for employment in the County PMHS. As such, the program does not allow for optional employment.

Question 19: *What if jobs in non-mental health agencies are available and they qualify for it? (like in Department of Education, Agriculture, Law Enforcement, etc)*

Answer: The Proposer must place program participants in County PMHS. If the non-mental health agencies named above are administered in whole, or in part, by the County Department of Mental Health through a contractual relationship they are considered part of the Public Mental Health System and program participants may secure employment in those agencies.

Question 20: *Who can actually be recruited for this program: Lay person, adult school's students, college students, other? They may have different skill level.*

Answer: Members of the populations listed above who meet the definition of Peer Personnel can be recruited into the program. Deliverable 2 states that the Proposer should recruit individuals who are Peer Personnel from the following populations:

- Students from high schools, adult education programs, regional occupation programs and/or community colleges serving communities identified as unserved or underserved by the county(ies)' Public Mental Health System within which the educational institution or training organization(s) is located.
- Individuals and their families who currently are or who have received health, mental health, behavioral health, and/or substance use services from a program or agency that serves the identified unserved or underserved communities.
- Individuals with health or mental health education and/or experience who can address cultural, diversity and language proficiency needs of the county(ies)' Public Mental Health System.

Question 21: *Does the training organization to be included in the proposal have to be established (i.e., is there to be an existing relationship with a training organization or can that be determined after the award)?*

Answer: The training organization does not have to be currently established and there does not currently have to be an existing relationship between the Proposer and a training organization. However, as part of the proposal, the Proposer must identify a relationship between county(ies) and an educational institution or training organization(s), or identify and describe the county training program that that will train and prepare Peer Personnel for employment in positions within the PMHS.

Question 22: *Does the funding cover curriculum development?*

Answer: Yes. Part of Deliverable 3 specifies that the Proposer is to establish/expand an educational or training program. It is expected that fulfilling this deliverable will entail developing/expanding a mental health educational or training program or course(s) of instruction that fulfills identified minimum qualifications for identified positions. The progress report of FY 2013-14, Section VI asks that the winning Proposer(s) report on the curriculum developed.

Question 23: *If the proposal is submitted by more than one county, will two professional reference letters be required from each participating county?*

Answer: No. Letters of reference are required only for the county that is identified as the fiscal sponsor in the proposal.

Question 24: *What is the length of time allowable between the completion of the training curriculum and when students are placed into a position?*

Answer: Training, including field placement, must be completed in by June 30, 2015 and employment must begin before June 30, 2016. However, please note that Contractor will not be reimbursed for the deliverables in FY 2015-16 until employment has begun.

Question 25: *There is concern that the RFP requires the County Mental Health Department to sign off the verification form (page 7). What does this mean legally? Does this hold the County accountable for the employment outcomes although the applicant may be a CBO?*

Answer: The County Mental Health Director is not held accountable for the employment outcomes of Peer Personnel. The County Mental Health Director is only required to verify that the need for Peer Personnel as defined by the positions listed in the proposal exists in his/her county and that the training specified in the proposal fulfills the minimum qualifications for those positions.

Question 26: *Verification form: if the applicant is a County contracted CBO or educational institute, who signs the verification form? Would it still be the County Mental Health Director that may or may not be a partner?*

Answer: The County Mental Health Director or designee of the County that is identified as the fiscal sponsor is asked to sign the verification form to verify that the identified positions are positions of need.

Question 27: *From Attachment 6 on page 23: the wording is not specific; is the contractor responsible to assess current and needed peer personnel in all of ____ County Behavioral Health Care programs or just the applicant's programs?*

Answer: No, the Proposer does not have to assess all of the programs in his/her County. The applicant is responsible for identifying entry-level positions that will enable an individual to be

employed in the Public Mental Health System and where the positions are located. The County Mental Health Director has to verify that the identified positions are positions of need.

Question 28: *There was no minimum length of time annotated defining successful employment. Does OSHPD have any recommendations about this for the applicants?*

Answer: There is no minimum length of time that defines successful employment. Proposals should provide straightforward and concise descriptions of the Proposer's ability to satisfy the requirements of this RFP. This may include the Proposer's definition of successful employment.

Question 29: *I note from an email received regarding this RFP that there are two mandatory proposal conferences are scheduled on Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 3:00 PM and on Thursday, January 30, 2014 at 3:00 PM for the purpose of clarifying the content of this RFP. Is it mandatory to participate in both conference calls?*

Answer: Yes. Both proposal conferences are mandatory.

Question 30: *Will individuals who are already working in peer positions but have not been trained, be eligible for the training that will be provided by Contractors?*

Answer: Yes. The Proposer may propose to recruit and retain peer personnel in identified entry-level positions in the Public Mental Health System.

Question 31: *Will you be able to send the forms that are included in the RFP in a Word Document? They can't be made into a word document and preserve the formatting.*

Answer: Please submit a written request to OSHPD.MHSAWET@oshpd.ca.gov.