

**Department of Rehabilitation Services  
Procurement Plan for Purchase of Services Contracts  
State Fiscal Years 2016 - 2018**

**I. Purpose**

This plan describes the approach that the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) will take during the next three state fiscal years to purchase, through Purchase of Service (POS) contracts, quality and cost-effective human services for clients from private providers. The plan is designed to combine DORS operational requirements with state and federal requirements, while requiring a consistent, open, transparent, fair, and competitive process for the procurement of services. The plan will direct all aspects of such procurements and will be periodically reviewed to ensure its continued relevance. Changes in DORS operational requirements, state and federal requirements, and a commitment by DORS to have the most responsive and effective service delivery system possible may necessitate adjustments to the plan. Such adjustments will be proposed to OPM as an amendment to the approved plan.

**II. Procurement Process**

The Department of Rehabilitation Services provides a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities, children, families, and individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. The primary customers of the agency are individuals with disabilities, and in our employment-based programs we also have business/employers as a dual customer. Our programs, policies and practices are designed to promote employment, independence, equal access, and self-sufficiency.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services administers over 13 legislatively authorized programs. By statute it is the state agency responsible for administering a number of programs under federal legislation, including the Rehabilitation Act, Assistive Technology Act and the Social Security Act.

To support the department's current programs DORS has entered into more than 105 Purchase of Service (POS) contracts for the provision of direct client services totaling \$49,612,098. Many of the existing contracts for direct client services have been historically funded following a determination that the quality of the services provided coupled with the need for continuity of services outweighed the benefit of competitive procurement. All contractors are monitored for compliance with program delivery requirements and fiscal accountability.

The decision to conduct a competitive procurement, regardless of the historical funding of contracts supporting a particular program is impacted by several factors:

- the identification of a new service need;
- changes to the current program by design or through state and/or federal requirements;

- a desire to restructure the existing service delivery system;
- contractor performance issues; or
- changes to available program funding.

The decision to conduct a competitive procurement is first addressed by the specific programmatic division. Programmatic divisions within the Department that operate programs supported by POS contracts include the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services – Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living, Assistive Technology and the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind – Adult Services and Business Enterprise. The staff in each division has experience in the design and delivery of services to persons with disabilities, children, families, and individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance, and independent living, and are knowledgeable regarding the populations’ needs.

Division staff responsible for the underlying program contacts the Procurement Division when the need to conduct a competitive procurement has been identified. The procurement development process is facilitated by the Procurement Division, in conjunction with the Centralized Contracting Unit (CCU). Procurement Division staff control the working document, request the necessary approvals from OPM and post the Request for Proposal (RFP) to the State Contracting Portal and DORS website. Procurement staff is responsible for the procurement process, coordinating the receipt and responses to questions and the development of the evaluation tool. Procurement staff coordinates the scoring meetings, reference checks and any requests for clarification. A member of the Procurement Division is the Agency Contact for competitive procurements. Respondents are advised not to discuss the procurement with any other DORS representative or they will risk disqualification. Procurement staff facilitates the scoring meetings to ensure that such meetings are conducted in accordance with the procurement standards. Following the conclusion of the scoring session and following the recommendation of the evaluation team, the Procurement Division submits a procurement summary and recommendation to the Commissioner.

While Procurement Division staff manages the development of the procurement and the procurement process, both the development and process require the active participation of program staff, fiscal staff and CCU staff. Program staff is responsible for ensuring that the scope of the procurement accurately reflects the programmatic needs. They are also responsible for identifying the documentation and information to be included in a response to a RFP that will allow the Department to select the most qualified respondent. Fiscal staff addresses the programmatic funding and fiscal reporting requirements and assist in the fiscal review to validate proposed use of funds.

Competitive procurements initiated by DORS adhere to the procurement standards set forth in the Connecticut General Statutes and established by the Secretary of OPM in the [Procurement Standards: For Personal Service Agreements and Purchase of Service Contracts](#), which is embedded in this section as a hyperlink. RFPs are standardized to the greatest extent possible, regardless of the services being sought, though each RFP is tailored to meet the needs of the program. On those rare occasions when a procurement result is contested or appealed, the Procurement Division is charged with

the review of the procurement. This is usually handled by a member of the Procurement Division that was not directly involved in the procurement.

### **III. Planning Approach**

This procurement plan has been developed by Procurement Staff with input from the DORS staff that is responsible for the administration of each program identified in this plan. Specifically, the program managers have recommended programs that will require competitive procurement or waivers from competitive procurement to ensure continuity of services to DORS clients.

### **IV. Procurement Schedule**

The DORS Procurement Schedule is attached and embedded in this section as a hyperlink.

### **V. Planning Factors**

Several important factors were considered by DORS when determining when and/or how to procure a particular program/service. Procurement planning for human services must consider the client first and foremost. Competitively procuring services should not take priority over continuity of care for vulnerable populations and should minimize disruption in services. Procurements for programs/services with multiple funding sources need to be coordinated to ensure that programs remain fully operational.

Development of the procurement schedule involved consideration of the date of the last contract, the identification of changes to the program, both anticipated and planned, the performance of the current contractors and changes to the available funding for the program.

The DORS programs identified in the procurement plan are supported by multiple Purchase of Service (POS) contracts with uniform contract periods that usually conform to the fiscal year of the funding source (State or Federal).

### **VI. Communication Protocol**

Upon approval of the procurement plan, it will be posted on the DORS website. The DORS procurement staff is the primary contact for questions pertaining to the procurement plan.

Current service providers will be notified at least 90 days in advance when one of their funded services will be competitively procured.

All RFPs are posted on the State Contracting Portal and the DORS website. DORS designates one procurement staff member as the "Official Agency Contact" for the purposes of each RFP.

## **VII. Implementation and Oversight**

This plan shall be implemented upon approval by OPM. The DORS procurement plan is effective for State Fiscal Years 2016 through 2018 and shall be subject to review and modification as may be necessary from time to time. All modifications will be submitted to OPM for approval. Requests for proposals during the time period covered in this procurement plan shall be issued in accordance with the guidelines of this plan. The end date of this procurement plan shall be June 30, 2018.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services procurement staff will, with the assistance of program staff, monitor the progress of the procurement plan. Monitoring activities will include:

1. A review, no less frequent than quarterly, of the status of the procurement plan with updates, as needed;
2. Issuance of recommendations regarding timing and sequencing of release of RFP's for each program/service;
3. Issuance of recommendations regarding requests for waiver from competitive procurement;
4. Review and issue recommendations of the potential need to modify the DORS' procurement process and procedures as needed; and
5. Provide ongoing communication with DORS executive staff to ensure consistency with DORS' overall strategic planning.

This oversight will focus on all competitive procurement for DORS, whether it involves new, first-time funding or competitive procurement of existing services. This will ensure that regardless of the type of procurement the same standardized process, procedure, internal levels of review, and consistency with overall strategic planning will be followed.

The program staff responsible for the administration of each programmatic area encompassed in this plan will be asked to review the plan periodically and will be given the opportunity to request changes in the plan.

Operational oversight of DORS procurement activities is provided by the Fiscal Administrative Manager 2 and the Official Agency Contact for the purposes of each RFP.

## **VII. Additional Considerations**

### **A. Key Principles**

This procurement plan is guided by the following principles:

1. Maintenance of services for the population the DORS serves to ensure that disruption in services is minimized as programs are competitively procured and new contracts are implemented;
2. Stimulation of quality, innovation, current best practices, and efficiency in service delivery;
3. Use of clearly defined, measurable outcomes and quality/performance measures;
4. A procurement schedule based on a strategic approach that considers client needs, barriers, and best timing; and
5. Coordination of procurement activities with other State human service agencies.

## **B. Best Practices**

In addition, the procurement process reflects best practices in the public sector, which include the following principles:

**1. Openness** – Current service providers will be notified at least 90 days in advance when one of their funded services will be competitively procured. Requests for Proposals (RFP's) are posted on the State Contracting Portal and the DORS website.

**2. Transparency** – RFP's clearly state the criteria by which proposals will be evaluated. Results of the RFP process are posted on the State Contracting Portal.

**3. Fairness** – Private providers that participate in the development of an RFP for new or existing service delivery models or programs are not allowed to compete for the right to negotiate a contract to provide those services. Members of the RFP development and evaluation teams are required to sign an Ethics and Confidentiality Statement, in which they declare and attest that they have no personal or financial interests in the outcome of the RFP process.

**4. Competition** – All eligible private providers have an equal opportunity to compete for the right to negotiate a contract with DORS. No RFP requirements specify any features that unnecessarily discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against current or prospective providers.

**5. Consistency** – A standardized procurement process is implemented. The process includes the use of a standardized RFP template, uniform submission requirements including a minimum of seven weeks between release of the RFP and the proposal due date, and standardized proposal review and scoring procedures.

## **C. Requests for Waivers from Competitive Procurement**

DORS is requesting waivers from competitive procurement for specific programs. The [DORS Waiver Request Justifications](#) are attached and embedded in this section as a

hyperlink. The following factors were considered in making a determination about which programs should seek waivers from competitive procurement:

1. The cost to the State of a competitive procurement process would outweigh the benefits of such a process;
2. Services will be provided by a contractor mandated by Connecticut General Statutes, a public act or special act;
3. The contractor has special capability, unique experience, proprietary services, or patent rights; and/or
4. Services will be provided by a contractor mandated by the federal government.

#### **D. Multi-year Contracting**

To minimize the administrative burden, related to the procurement process, on its contractors and DORS staff, DORS is considering efficiencies in the development of the procurement schedule. While DORS generally executes multi-year contracts with a maximum term of three years, DORS is considering pursuing approval for some longer-term contracts when appropriate to reduce the frequency of competitive procurement and to allow staggered contract issue dates. DORS is also considering the ability to extend certain contracts, originally entered into through an RFP, without a subsequent competitive procurement, if circumstances and performance warrant the pursuit of such a request with OPM. New providers with limited or no performance history and/or contracts for the provision of new program services will have shorter contract terms until an acceptable performance history has been demonstrated.

Benefits of longer-term, multi-year contracts for both State agencies and private providers include:

1. Stabilized services and contractor relationships;
2. Long-term program and performance targets; and
3. Reduced paperwork.

Department of Rehabilitation Services	PROCUREMENT SCHEDULE				
	For SFY 2016, 2017, 2018				
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
Program/Service Name	Last RFP	\$ Amount	Contracts	Next RFP	RFP Cycle
	(SFY, Qtr)	(Total)	(Number)	(SFY, Qtr)	(In Years)
Assistive Technology	None	\$ 281,000.00	2	WAIVER	N/A
Assistive Technology for Deaf Blind Adults	2012, 3	\$ 900,000.00	5	WAIVER	N/A
BESB Adult Services	2014, 4	\$ 452,568.00	4	2016/4	2
BESB Business Enterprise	2014, 4	\$ 1,254,265.00	4	2016/4	2
Centers for Independent Living	None	\$ 2,559,540.00	6	WAIVER	N/A
Vocational Rehabilitation/Community Rehabilitation Providers	None	\$ 39,439,500.00	69	WAIVER	N/A
Vocational Rehabilitation/Driving Assessment Vehicle Modifications	None	\$ 150,000.00	1	WAIVER	N/A
Vocational Rehabilitation/Home Modifications - Architects	2008, 2	\$ 475,000.00	5	WAIVER	N/A
Vocational Rehabilitation/Industry Specific Training Programs	2011, 4	\$ 3,920,225.00	8	WAIVER	N/A
Vocational Rehabilitation/Personal Care Assistants	None	\$ 180,000.00	1	WAIVER	N/A
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 49,612,098.00</b>	<b>105</b>		