**North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation &**

**North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind**

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATION FOR COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PARTNERSHIP (RACRP)**

For eligible grantees to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities across North Carolina, through:

**Competitive Grant for Pre-Employment Transition Services
[PRE-ETS RACRP #1062]**

RACRP Release Date: April 23, 2024

Deadline for Initial Questions: April 26, 2024 \*

Responses Posted to Initial Questions: May 1, 2024

Deadline for Applications for Initial Awards: 5:00 pm May 7, 2024 \*\*

Questions to: dvr.vrPRE-ETSRACRP@dhhs.nc.gov

Submit applications to: Electronic (required):

dvr.vrPRE-ETSRACRP@dhhs.nc.gov

Mail (required, one full copy with original

signature):

NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

 Attn: Pre-ETS RACRP

 2801 Mail Service Center

 Raleigh, NC 27699-2801

Submission instructions: Please submit one complete copy of the

application with an original signature via mail. Applicants must also submit a complete copy electronically. Faxed applications will not be accepted.

\* Questions received after the Deadline for Initial Questions will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

\*\* Applications received after the Deadline for Applications for Initial Awards will be considered on an ongoing basis contingent on funds availability.

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# INTRODUCTION

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are a set of activities defined by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (Public Law 113-128) intended to expose students with disabilities at an early age to self-advocacy, postsecondary training, and employment skills and options. WIOA requires that the vocational rehabilitation program provide a continuum of services to students and youth which begins with Pre-ETS and, for individuals who are eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program, continues with vocational rehabilitation transition and employment services. The NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NCDVR) and NC Division of Services for the Blind (NCDSB) seek applications from organizations and agencies that will provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities in North Carolina.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Purpose of Request

The purpose of this Request for Applications for Community Rehabilitation Partnership (RACRP) is to solicit agencies or organizations to provide pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) in order to increase the Divisions’ capacity for reaching and serving students with disabilities across North Carolina.

## Award Amount, Term, And Special Provisions

The Divisions will award up to $17 million for Pre-ETS projects, contingent on funding availability. The actual number of awards will be dependent on the number of applications that are selected via the method defined in Section VI, Subsection B and that meet the minimum qualifications and performance requirements as defined in Sections III and IV of this RACRP. The Awards may be issued and then renewed annually for a period not to exceed three (3) years.

## State of Emergency Modification

In the event of a local or statewide Declaration of a State of Emergency by a governmental official, the RACRP may be temporarily suspended and/or contracts for awards issued under the RACRP may be modified or amended. Suspensions or modifications are effective during the period in which the state or local emergency declaration is in force. Applicants and Awardees will be notified of any action required.

## Definitions

**Applicant:** an organization or agency submitting an application in response to this RACRP.

**Audited Financial Statement: “**work product resulting from the independent examination of [an organization’s] financial records by a licensed certified public accountant” and includes “an examination of the financial records, accounts, business transactions, accounting practices, and internal controls of [the organization]” by an auditor who is “not an employee of the [organization] but instead is retained through a contract for services and is hence ‘independent.’” (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/nonprofit-audit-guide/what-is-independent-audit>)

**Awardee**: A Provider organization or agency who has submitted an application for this RACRP and has been awarded an active contract to deliver Pre-ETS services.

**Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education (counseling on postsecondary training options):** information on college application and admission processes, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), college course offerings, career options, the types of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace, postsecondary opportunities associated with career fields or pathways, and resources that may be used to support individual student success in education and training, which could include disability support services (34 CFR §361).

**Deliverable(s):** a statement or statements that comprise a milestone and describe the specific activities or interventions that are to be performed for or delivered to a student with a disability.

**Division:** refers to either the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind.

**Divisions:** refers to both the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind, whose needs are jointly stated in this RACRP.

**Financial Soundness and Stability:** the ability for the organization to develop and execute a new program without the benefit of remuneration for a minimum of six (6) months.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** as required by Part B of IDEA, a written statement for each child with a disability including present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, measurable annual goals, special education and related services to enable the child to make progress in goals, accommodations required to access services, and, beginning at age 16, a plan of transition services. (For full definition, see 34 CFR §300.320.)

**Individual with a disability:** an individual who (a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (b) has a record of such an impairment; or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment (29 CFR §1630.2(g)).

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** federal legislation governing how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities (20 U.S.C. Chapter 33).

**Instruction in self-advocacy:** instruction on rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodations or services and supports needed during the transition from secondary to postsecondary education and employment; includes disability and peer mentoring and youth leadership activities (34 CFR §361).

**Integrated community setting:** a setting typically found in the community in which students with disabilities interact with non-disabled individuals other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those students with disabilities (34 CFR §361.5(c)(32)).

**Job exploration counseling:** providing information regarding in-demand industry sections and occupations, as well as non-traditional employment, labor market composition, administration of vocational interest inventories, and identification of career pathways of interest to the students; may include a discussion of the students’ vocational interest inventory results, in-demand occupations, career pathways, and local labor market information that applies to those particular interests (34 CFR §361).

**Major life activity:** includes caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working; also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions (29 CFR §1630.2(h)(1)).

**Milestone:** a per-student unit of billable Pre-ETS services defined by a set of deliverables and paid at a standard rate once completed.

**Potentially eligible:** has not or has not yet submitted an application and been determined eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program (34 CFR §361).

**Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Required Activities:** Any or all of the following five activities provided to *students with disabilities* as defined in Section II, Subsection D: (1) job exploration counseling, (2) work-based learning experiences which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside of the traditional school setting (including internships), (3) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; (4) workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and (5) instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring (34 CFR §361.48(a)(2)).

**Recognized postsecondary education credential:** an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree, as well as graduate degrees for the purposes of the VR program as required by section 103(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA; awarded in recognition of an individual’s attainment of measurable technical or industry/occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an industry/occupation (RSA-TAC-17-01).

**Service Delivery Methods:** The means by which Pre-ETS interventions are made available to students with disabilities. Allowable methods include arranging/ coordinating, facilitating, instructing, and assessing.

**Student with a disability:** An individual with a disability in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program who is aged 14-21 years (or 22 years if receiving services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and not yet exited from secondary education) and is (1) eligible for and receiving special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or (2) is a student who is an individual with a disability for the purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (34 CFR §361.5(c)(51)). A postsecondary program must result in a recognized postsecondary education credential (RSA-TAC-17-01).

**Work-based learning experiences:** job training, informational interviewing, work-site tour, job shadowing, or mentoring opportunities and work experiences such as paid and unpaid internships, apprenticeships (not including pre-apprenticeships and Registered apprenticeships), short-term employment, fellowships, or on-the-job training (34 CFR §361).

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):** federal legislation to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth; enacted July 22, 2014 (P.L. 113-128).

**Workplace readiness training:** programming to develop social skills and independent living, such as communication and interpersonal skills, financial literacy, orientation and mobility skills, job-seeking skills, understanding employer expectations for punctuality and performance, as well as other “soft” skills necessary for employment (34 CFR §361).

#  MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

To be considered for an award, applicants must meet all of the following minimum qualifications:

1. The Applicant shall:
* provide evidence (e.g., staff resumes, staff position descriptions) that the organization’s direct service staff have three or more years of related experiences with students or youth in pre-employment transition or similar services for which the Applicant is applying,

OR

* provide evidence (e.g., position description, job posting) that the organization will recruit for direct service staff with three or more years of related experiences with students or youth in pre-employment transition or similar services for which the Applicant is applying

OR

* provide evidence (e.g., organizational chart, staff resumes, staff bios, staff position description) that direct service staff will be supervised by individuals who have three or more years of related experiences with students or youth in pre-employment transition or similar services for which the Applicant is applying
1. The Applicant must be registered as a business with the NC Secretary of State and provide a valid NC Secretary of State Identification Number (SOSID).
2. The Applicant must provide evidence of the organization’s policies currently used to conduct criminal background checks on the applicant’s officers, directors, employees, agents, or subcontractors. The applicant’s policies shall require completion of a criminal background check for all staff and volunteers having direct interaction with students and/or those who are responsible for delivery of goods or services to school system property at least annually. This check should also include a check of the National Sex Offender Registry. The policies shall require that any prior felony convictions or other abnormalities must have written evidence of supervisory review and acknowledgement, which justifies employment.[[1]](#footnote-2)
3. The Applicant must provide evidence of financial soundness and stability as defined in Section II, Subsection D. Applicants shall evidence the organization’s financial soundness and stability by providing the organization’s most recent audited financial statement also defined in Section II, Subsection D. Audited financial statements are utilized by the Divisions to assist in determining an organization’s operational and/or financial risk. If an audited financial statement is not available, the Applicant may submit the organization’s most recent year’s tax return in lieu of an audited financial statement.

# PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to meeting minimum qualifications as defined in Section III, successful applicants will demonstrate intent to provide Pre-ETS to a specific group of students with disabilities with programming that utilizes qualified staff. Applicants who meet minimum qualifications will then be evaluated based on the following components:

## Population to be Served

The Applicant shall identify a specific sub-group of students with disabilities to be served by the proposed program and shall specify the NC counties in which Pre-ETS will be provided to these students. Individuals within the targeted population must meet the definition of a student with a disability as defined in Section II, Subsection D. The Applicant shall specify the number of students within the specified sub-group(s) who will be served by the proposed Pre-ETS program. The Applicant shall describe characteristics of the targeted population, such as specific disability category, grade/age group, school(s), or targeted demographics. The Applicant shall demonstrate the ability to access the targeted sub-group in terms of identifying prospective program participants and implementing the proposed services with these participants once the students have been referred by the Division(s). The Applicant shall indicate whether services will be provided to individual students with disabilities and/or groups of students with disabilities.

## Organizational Overview

The Applicant shall provide an organizational summary demonstrating fitness for making Pre-ETS available to students with disabilities. Applicants may be public or private entities, either not-for-profit or for-profit. The organizational summary shall also outline the organization’s mission, history, primary purpose(s), governance structure, the geographic area that the Applicant’s organization currently serves, and the organization’s capacity to provide Pre-ETS services either independently or in partnership with other organizations. The Applicant shall supply supporting documentation to further summarize the structure of the organization including:

* Mission, history, and primary purpose of your organization
* Organizational Chart
* List of Board Members and their offices and professional affiliations
* Copies of policies on customer satisfaction and customer complaints
* Copies of workplace policies addressing requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA Amendments Act) of 2008 (Public Law 110–325), Equal Employment Opportunity Act (Public Law 92–261), and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (Public Law 91-596).

Additionally, organizations shall be comprised of qualified staff with relevant experience for making the proposed Pre-ETS services available to the targeted group of students with disabilities. The roles and responsibilities of members of the Applicant’s organization should be clear and reasonable in terms of the proposed Pre-ETS services. The Applicant shall supply supporting documentation to further describe the qualification and roles of program staff including:

* Job descriptions of all staff roles to be utilized to deliver the proposed Pre-ETS program
* Copies of licenses, certifications or accreditations maintained by the agency and related to performance requirements

Finally, the Applicant shall have sufficient capacity to carry out Pre-ETS services in the community(ies) of the targeted students with disabilities. In addition to the minimum qualification for staff experience, the following factors will be considered when determining whether the Applicant’s organization has relevant experience and sufficient capacity:

* Partnerships with the Divisions’ VR staff in offices local to the targeted student population
* Partnerships with schools and school districts for outreach and identification of students and youth for programs and services
* Experience with developing and implementing programs specific to the needs of students and youth with disabilities
* Existing collaborative relationships with community partners and employers for the purposes of developing the skills of students with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment, participating in postsecondary education, and living as independently and as integrated as possible in the community
* Familiarity with the unique needs of students with disabilities in order to support these needs while leveraging community partnerships

## Program Location

The Applicant shall identify the location(s) where the proposed Pre-ETS services will be provided. Applicants must provide Pre-ETS Services in locations which are safe and accessible to student participants in accordance with Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. §794), and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. §4151 et seq.). Services may be provided in schools, classrooms, workplaces, other community locations, or locations operated by the Applicant. Work-based learning experiences must be provided in integrated community settings as defined in Section II, Subsection D[[2]](#footnote-3). Should the Applicant’s organization include non-Pre-ETS business operations whereby employees work in competitive integrated employment, the Applicant may propose these competitive integrated employment operations as sites for work-based learning experiences so long as students are also given the option to participate in work-based learning experiences outside of these locations.

## Program of Services and Program Milestones

As described in Section III, Minimum Qualifications, the Applicant shall propose a program of services which includes one or more of the five Pre-ETS Required Activity types as defined in Section II, Subsection D. Using the *Pre-ETS Standard Milestone Selection Page*, the Applicant shall propose a program of services by selecting the standard milestones the Applicant intends to provide during the contract period and the number of student outcomes for each standard milestone selected.

Proposed Pre-ETS programs may be comprised of any number of the standardized milestones found in *Appendix A,* *Pre-ETS Standard Milestone List*. Considerations for the number of program milestones and the number of student outcomes include, but are not limited to:

* Timeframe needed to complete defined milestone deliverables
* Complexity of milestone documentation
* Frequency of access to student participants
* Number of possible student referrals in the targeted service area(s)
* Extent to which multiple milestones will be provided simultaneously to students with disabilities
* Whether milestones will be provided to groups or individual students with disabilities

#### Pre-ETS Standard Milestones

A Pre-ETS program is comprised of the Applicant’s selected Pre-ETS Milestones. The Standard Pre-ETS Milestones are defined in *Appendix A, Pre-ETS Standard Milestone List*. Applicants must select all milestones that the Applicant desires to provide during the initial contract period. In order to provide additional standard milestones that have not been approved as part of the Applicant’s initial application, Awardees would be required to request a contract amendment. Pre-ETS Milestones can also be re-negotiated for Awardees during contract renewal periods.

#### Pre-ETS Objectives

Pre-ETS is intended to provide students with disabilities an early start at job exploration necessary for movement from school to post-school activities that will maximize their potential to enter competitive integrated employment. Therefore, the Standard Pre-ETS Milestones are associated with one or more of the following objectives:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pre-ETS Required Activity Type** | **Pre-ETS Service Objectives** |
| 1. **Job Exploration Counseling**
 | 1A | Explore career options and identify career pathways of interest |
| 2A | Uncover vocational interests using inventories |
| 3A | Learn about new skills needed in the workplace and for specific jobs |
| 4A | Understand the labor market including in demand industries and occupations |
| 5A | Learn about non-traditional employment options |
| 1. **Work-Based Learning Experiences**
 | 1B | Develop work skills through participation in paid and nonpaid work experiences in community integrated employment |
| 2B | Apply classroom knowledge to the workplace through direct employer/community involvement. |
| 3B | Gain greater understanding of workplace culture and cultivate motivation around the benefits of competitive integrated employment  |
| 4B | Learn from people currently practicing in the occupations and careers of interest to the student |
| 1. **Counseling on Post-Secondary Training Options**
 | 1C | Gain greater understanding of types of postsecondary training available to prepare the student for the workplace |
| 2C | Increase awareness of financial resources for funding postsecondary education |
| 3C | Understand the role of disability support services and other resources to promote student success in the postsecondary education setting |
| 4C | Improve postsecondary education planning skills that result in increased postsecondary access and academic success |
| 1. **Workplace Readiness Training**
 | 1D | Develop communication and interpersonal skills required to interact with supervisors and coworkers in the workplace |
| 2D | Develop self-management and independent living skills required to engage in postsecondary education and/or employment (e.g., punctuality, time management, setting goals, meeting expectations) |
| 3D | Improve knowledge of accessing community supports and managing resources (financial literacy) |
| 4D | Gain knowledge of job seeking skills |
| 5D | Develop orientation and mobility skills that allow the student to better access the community for participation in postsecondary education or employment opportunities |
| 1. **Instruction in Self-Advocacy**
 | 1E | Develop student’s knowledge of self |
| 2E | Improve student’s knowledge of rights and responsibilities, including requesting disability-related accommodations in the education setting or workplace |
| 3E | Develop student’s communication skills for asserting his/her own interests and desires |
| 4E | Build the student’s leadership skills |

#### Service Delivery Methods

Each Pre-ETS Standard Milestone includes a description of the service delivery method(s) to be used to provide services to students with disabilities. Service delivery methods are the various strategies taken to provide Pre-ETS Interventions. The service delivery methods proposed allow Awardees to address the variable needs of individual students with disabilities within a group. The allowable methods as defined in Section II, Subsection D include:

**Arranging/Coordinating**: Making contact with students, schools, businesses, or community agencies to plan and schedule the time, location, supports, goals, and strategies for carrying out activities.

Ex: Arranging tours, guest speakers, or job sampling

**Facilitating**: Actively supporting the student through synchronous learning and communication to emphasize relevant concepts through activities.

Ex: Facilitating project-based learning, group discussion, tours, student research, or role play

**Instructing**: Using Division-approved[[3]](#footnote-4) content and mediums to train students on work concepts and behaviors

Ex: Instructing on workplace soft skills, job seeking skills, rights and responsibilities, educational pathways, or career clusters

**Assessing**: Using Division-approved3 tools to assess the student’s interests or progress in developing pre-ETS skills

Ex: Assessing the student’s career interests or job interview skills

#### Service Delivery Content and Mediums

Awardees are responsible for identifying the content and mediums that will be used to deliver the Pre-ETS Standard Milestones selected. Content includes the information shared with students to convey various Pre-ETS concepts. Content should be current, relevant, developmentally-appropriate, and valid. Medium refers to the means by which content is presented to students. Mediums used should take into account the communication, comprehension, and technology skills of students. The needs and capabilities of individual students with disabilities are unique and groups of students with disabilities may vary in composition from homogeneous to heterogeneous groups (in terms of academic pathway, school grade, means of communication, reading levels, etc.). Therefore, Awardees shall use content and mediums which allow students to participate to the fullest extent possible in the delivery of pre-ETS services. The Applicant shall consider making available a variety of curricula, lessons, activities, resources, models, and assessments which can be delivered via a variety of modes including direct instruction, modeling, observation, kinesthetic (hands-on) learning, inquiry-based activities, and project-based learning. The Applicant shall consider use of a variety of mediums such as face-to-face, printed materials, video, and web-based resources to conduct synchronous (real-time) services[[4]](#footnote-5).

#### Repeat of Standard Milestones

Whereas transition from secondary school is an outcome-oriented process beginning with the provision of Pre-ETS, Applicants may propose programs that guide students through multiple years of their secondary and early postsecondary education to prepare the student to engage in the individualized vocational rehabilitation process which leads to gainful employment. Furthermore, Pre-ETS may be delivered to individuals and/or groups of students which vary in composition (in terms of grade level, student pace, date of pre-ETS program initiation, etc.). Some students with disabilities will benefit from repeating Pre-ETS concepts to adequately develop their skills.

Therefore, some Pre-ETS Standard Milestones can be repeated for a student with a disability. *Appendix A, Pre-ETS Standard Milestone List* outlines those Pre-ETS Standard Milestones that can be repeated with a student with a disability and those which may be provided to a student with a disability only once. However, where repeating is allowed, the Awardee shall vary the content and mediums to assure that the student is not repeating identical Pre-ETS activities. Unless otherwise indicated in the Standard Milestone deliverables described in Appendix A, the repeat of a milestone for a specific student may occur in the same contract period as it was initially provided to that student or in a different contract period. Additionally, the determination as to whether a student should repeat a milestone should be determined in conjunction with and approved by the student’s assigned VR representative.

Applicants shall recognize that students may or may not be continuously available to participate in extended Pre-ETS programs. As such, most Pre-ETS Standard Milestones do not require pre-requisite knowledge or activities in order for the student to participate.

#### Program Frequency/Length

Pre-ETS Standard Milestones shall be provided for the length of time required to complete the required milestone deliverables for each student. Time increments for service delivery may range from 1-2 contact hours to weekly or daily sessions lasting for a semester or more.[[5]](#footnote-6)

## Milestone Rates

By selecting the Pre-ETS Standard Milestones on the Pre-ETS Community Partnership Application or Renewal Application, Awardees agree to be reimbursed at the standard milestone rate for each milestone completed for each student. Pre-ETS Standard Milestone rates are available upon request and may be updated by the Division with notice to Awardees.

## Milestone Outcomes

The Applicant shall propose the number of student outcomes that are being targeted for each selected Pre-ETS Standard Milestone for the contract period. Reimbursement for a specific Pre-ETS Standard Milestone cannot exceed the number of outcomes on the Awardee’s partnership agreement times the milestone rate. Student outcomes are not transferrable between Pre-ETS Standard Milestones on an Awardee’s partnership agreement. The number of student outcomes for one or more Pre-ETS Standard Milestones may be updated by amending the partnership agreement.

## Contract Period

## The Applicant shall indicate the targeted length of the initial contract period by specifying a contract end date on the Pre-ETS Community Partnership Application or Renewal Application. The initial contract period shall be no less than six (6) months and no more than twelve (12) months.

# PERFORMANCE STANDARDS, PROGRAM MONITORING, & QUALITY ASSURANCE

Pre-ETS programs are intended to improve the employability, participation in postsecondary education, and community inclusion of students with disabilities. Therefore, Pre-ETS programs are evaluated according to student-level and program-level service delivery standards.

## Student-Level Documentation and Invoicing

Successful applicants may be awarded a partnership agreement which defines the specific milestones to be offered by the Awardee and the associated deliverables and documentation that must be completed in order for the provider to be reimbursed for services provided to each student with a disability referred by the Division(s).

Contract reimbursements are issued upon an Awardee’s invoice submission and the Division’s approval of required documentation specific to the Pre-ETS Standard Milestones at the standard milestone rates. Services are not reimbursed solely based on time spent in providing services. Reimbursements are not issued for partial completion of milestone deliverables.

Awardees must use documentation formats that are approved by the Divisions. The Divisions may require Awardees to use the Divisions’ electronic case management system to directly input service and billing information. Milestone documentation must demonstrate that each milestone deliverable has been met. Documentation requirements for each standard milestone are defined in *Appendix A, Pre-ETS Standard Milestone List*.

Examples of documentation may include assessment reports, progress reports, training plans, timesheets, and work samples. Work samples may include student outputs such as resumes/applications, student presentations, student reflections, student goal plans, and student career portfolio artifacts. Work samples should reflect the student’s work and understanding. If, as a result of the student’s impairment, the student requires a staff person or other adult to scribe or generate the work sample, then this should be indicated on the work sample.

The Division will implement standardized pre/post measures of students’ self-assessments of their knowledge and competence in the Pre-ETS Required Activities defined in Section II. Awardees shall administer and submit the results of these measures to the Division within the timeframes determined by the Division.

Progress reports shall be comprised of dates of service, attendance information, description of activities/interventions used to meet each of the specific milestone deliverables for the milestone, student participation rating, notes on the student’s progress, notes on the results of any assessments or student work samples, and the Awardee’s recommendations for next steps with Pre-ETS or other agency services.

Awardees shall request milestone payments from the Divisions by submitting invoicing and supporting documentation within a timeframe defined by the Divisions, and at least monthly.

Student documentation shall be maintained by Awardees in separate case records for each student. Records may be maintained in electronic format by the Awardee so long as the information is encrypted and maintained on secure servers accessed by password-protected devices for which access is limited to persons for whom the student/student’s representative has granted consent. Student case records must be made available to the Division(s) upon request.

## Program-Level Monitoring & Quality Assurance

Awardees shall have an annual program review administered by the Division’s Contract Administrator(s). Additional reviews shall be conducted as needed. The annual review shall focus on the following (subject to revision at the time of award):

1. Accessibility – Policies and practices that promote full program accessibility for each consumer (physical barriers, specific disability accommodations, etc.).
2. Timeliness and accuracy of billing.
3. Communication, collaboration, and cooperation between student, the Division, and the Awardee.
4. Confidentiality – Maintenance of the confidentiality of all medical, psychological, and other consumer information shared with the Awardee by the Division.
5. Documentation that shows the need for and benefit from the service(s) to students. Service plans, summaries, and reports shall reflect collaboration with Division.
6. Key Personnel – Changes in staff assigned to the performance of services to consumers are communicated to the Division. Assurance that the Awardee has completed background checks on direct service staff.
7. Utilization – Performance indicates that Awardee is meeting milestone projections.
8. Recruitment – Awardee is engaged with referral sources to recruit future students.
9. Customer satisfaction summary report indicates a level of overall satisfaction with services provided as perceived by the student participant.

Awardees shall be responsible for maintaining program-level information that enables the Division(s) to monitor the programmatic and financial performance of the Awardee’s Pre-ETS program. Awardees shall provide a Program Summary report describing overall program utilization and effectiveness at least annually or more frequently as defined by the Division. The Program Summary will be utilized as a part of program monitoring by the Division.

Awardees shall maintain copies of criminal background checks conducted on its officers, directors, employees, agents, or subcontractors and any supervisory review. This documentation shall be kept within the individual’s personnel file and will be subject to review during an on-site monitoring visit.

Additionally, although organizations are not required to obtain an annual audit of their financial statements, awardees shall submit a financial statement annually. Awardees may be asked to provide general ledger or accounts receivable reports annually or more frequently to reconcile program billing. Awardees shall track program expenses according to program-specific general ledger codes.

# APPLICATION AND PROCUREMENT PROCESS

## Application Submission

One (1) complete original application, including a signed Cover Page, must be mailed and received by the deadline. In addition, applicants should submit one electronic copy of their complete signed application by email to dvr.vrPRE-ETSRACRP@dhhs.nc.gov.

## Selection Criteria

All applications will be reviewed to ensure all required application components and supporting documents are included. At the discretion of the Divisions, applications that are found to be insufficient or incomplete may be rejected.

Complete and responsive applications will then be forwarded to subject matter experts for evaluation of minimum qualifications, programmatic requirements, organizational capacity, and financial soundness according to *Appendix B* *Application for Pre-ETS Community Rehabilitation Partnership Scoring Form* (for new applications), or *Appendix* C, *Renewal* *Application for Pre-ETS Community Rehabilitation Partnership Scoring Form* (for renewal applications). Although a primary factor, subject matter expert recommendations will not be the sole determinant for awards. The Divisions will consider overall factors involving the applications as a whole, such as geographic distribution, program variety, administrative capacity, and population to be served when determining final award decisions. The Divisions’ decision will be final.

## Procurement Process

The following is a general description of the process by which an agency or organization will be selected to complete the goal or objective.

1. Written (emailed) questions concerning this RACRP specifications will be received until the date specified on the cover sheet of this RACRP*.* Upon request, a summary of all questions and answers will be emailed to requesting agencies.
2. Applications, in the form of one (1) mailed original and one (1) emailed signed copy will be received from each agency or organization. The original must be signed and dated by an official authorized to bind the agency or organization.
3. All applications, including renewal applications, must be received by the funding agency not later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of this RACRP. Applications received after the Deadline for Applications for Initial Awards will be considered on an ongoing basis contingent on funds availability. Faxed applications will not be accepted.
4. At the date and time of the application deadline, the applications from each responding agency and organization will be logged in.
5. At their option, the evaluators may request additional information from any or all applicants for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the materials presented in any part of the application. However, agencies and organizations are cautioned that the evaluators are not required to request clarification. Therefore, all applications should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the agency or organization.
6. Applications will be evaluated according to completeness, content, experience with similar projects, ability of the agency's or organization's staff, cost, etc. The award of a contract to one agency and organization does not mean that the other applications lacked merit, but that, all facts considered, the selected application was deemed to provide the best service to the State.
7. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a request for applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.

## General Information on Submitting Applications

1. **Award or Rejection *(contingent upon availability of funding)***All qualified applications will be evaluated and award made to that agency or organization whose proposed service capabilities is deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any or all offers if determined to be in its best interest. Successful applicants of initial awards will be notified by May 17, 2024.
2. **Cost of Application Preparation**
Any cost incurred by an agency or organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency's or organization's sole responsibility; the funding agency will not reimburse any agency or organization for any pre-award costs incurred.
3. **Elaborate Applications**

Elaborate applications in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond that necessary to present a complete and effective application are not desired.

1. **Oral Explanations**
The funding agency will not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after awarding the grant.
2. **Reference to Other Data.**
Only information that is received in response to this RACRP will be evaluated; reference to information previously submitted will not suffice.
3. **Titles**
Titles and headings in thisRACRPand any subsequent RACRPare for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.
4. **Form of Application**
Each application must be submitted on the form or in the format provided by the funding agency and will be incorporated into the funding agency's Performance Agreement (contract).
5. **Exceptions**
All applications are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses will be controlled by such terms and conditions. The attachment of other terms and condition by any agency and organization may be grounds for rejection of that agency or organization's application. Funded agencies and organizations specifically agree to the conditions set forth in the Performance Agreement (contract).
6. **Advertising**
In submitting its application, agencies and organizations agree not to use the results therefrom or as part of any news release or commercial advertising without prior written approval of the funding agency.
7. **Right to Submitted Material**
All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RACRP, and all other reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.
8. **Competitive Offer**
Pursuant to the provision of G.S. 143-54, and under penalty of perjury, the signer of any application submitted in response to this RACRP thereby certifies that this application has not been arrived at collusively or otherwise in violation of either Federal or North Carolina antitrust laws.
9. **Agency and Organization's Representative**
Each agency or organization shall submit with its application the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with authority to bind the agency or organization and answer questions or provide clarification concerning the application.
10. **Subcontracting**
Agencies and organizations may propose to subcontract portions of work provided that their applications clearly indicate the scope of the work to be subcontracted, and to whom. All information required about the prime grantee is also required for each proposed subcontractor.
11. **Proprietary Information**
Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the agency or organization does not wish disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by NCAC TO1: 05B.1501 and G.S. 132-1.3 if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL." Any section of the application that is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section.
12. **Participation Encouraged**
Pursuant to Article 3 and 3C, Chapter 143 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Executive Order No. 77, the funding agency invites and encourages participation in this RACRP by businesses owned by minorities, women and the disabled including utilization as subcontractor(s) to perform functions under this Request for Applications.
13. **Contract**
The Division will issue a contract to the recipient of the grant that will include their application. Expenditures can begin immediately upon receipt of a completely signed contract.

All applicants must submit their most recent organizational audit in accordance with G.S. 143-6-22 and G.S. 143-6-23 as applicable to the agency or organization’s status. Also, the contract may include assurances the successful applicant would be required to execute when signing the contract including:

* IRS Tax Exemption Status Letter (if applicable)
* IRS Tax Exemption Verification Form (Annual) (if applicable)  \*\*\*
* Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement and Policy (source document must be on file, send new one if a new COI policy has been adopted by your entity) \*\*\*
* Conflict of Interest Verification (Annual)
* Federal Certifications
* State Certification
* Proof of Insurance Form (or certificate of insurance)
* State Grant Certification – No Overdue Tax Debts  \*\*\*
* Federal Exclusion Certification
* Proof of SAM registration
* DVRS Internal Control Questionnaire
* General Terms and Conditions will be required and inserted into the final contract

\*\*\* Indicates must be notarized

# APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUIRED FORMAT

* The *Cover Page* must be completed for all applications (including renewal applicants). The *Cover Page* must include the original signature of an authorized agency official.
* The Applicant shall use the *Pre-ETS Application for Community Rehabilitation Partnership* form to submit information as required by Section IV, Performance Requirements. **Applicants who have a current award to provide Pre-ETS services and are in good standing with the Division(s) shall complete the *Pre-ETS* *Renewal Application for Community Rehabilitation Partnership*.**
* The Applicant shall submit the *Pre-ETS Standard Milestone Selection Page* along with the correct Application form.
* Where required by Section IV, and where indicated in the *Pre-ETS Application for Community Rehabilitation Partnership*/*Pre-ETS Renewal Application for Community Rehabilitation Partnership*, the Applicant shall attach supplementary information. Any attachments must be clearly labeled (electronic file name and print heading) and must be formatted to print on letter size (8 ½” x 11”) paper and single sided.
* The Applicant shall submit one complete copy of the application with an original signature via mail. The Applicant must also submit a complete copy electronically (signed cover page may be scanned). Faxed applications will not be accepted.
* Mailed copies should not be stapled or bound. Instead user binder clips or paper clips.
* Also refer to Section VI, Subsection D for general information on submitting applications

# APPENDICES

* Appendix A: Pre-ETS Standard Milestone List
* Appendix B: Application for Pre-ETS Community Rehabilitation Partnership Scoring Form
* Appendix C: Renewal Application for Pre-ETS Community Rehabilitation Partnership Scoring Form

### PRE-ETS STANDARD MILESTONE LIST

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### Application for Pre-ETS Community Rehabilitation Partnership Scoring Form

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicant:** |  | **Date of Review:** |  | **Name of Reviewer:** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **ALL of the criteria in this section MUST be met for an application to continue through the review process *(RACRP, Sec III)*:** |
| **Criteria met?** | **YES** | **NO** | **Notes** |
| 1. The Applicant has a minimum of three years of related experience in the specified Pre-ETS Services with students with disabilities (either existing direct service staff, plans to recruit for experience, or appropriate supervision).
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The Applicant is a registered business with the State of North Carolina with SOSID.
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The Applicant provides policy on performing background checks with NSOR check and supervisory review of abnormalities.
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The Applicant provides an Audited Financial Statement or most recent year’s tax return.
 |  |  |  |
|  |  |
| **Minimum qualification disposition:** | **Continue review?** |
| **YES** | **NO** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |
| **The criteria in this section shall be reviewed and scored by the RACRP evaluation team members:** |
| **Programmatic Requirements and Priorities** *(Section IV, Subsections A, C-G)*  | **Possible Points** | **Actual Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. The application is detailed in explaining the specific targeted population.
 | **5** |  |  |
| 1. There is evidence of the Applicant’s ability to access the specified targeted population of students with disabilities.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The intended location of services is clear and compliant with state and federal policies and regulations.
 | **5** |  |  |
| 1. The standard pre-ETS milestones selected are expected to fill service needs in the targeted service area(s) for the targeted student population.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The proposed curricula, tools, and assessments are expected to meet the needs of the targeted student population in providing the standard Pre-ETS milestones.
 | **8** |  |  |
| **TOTAL:** | **34** |  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Financial Soundness***(Section III; Section IV, Subsection E)* | **Possible Points** | **Actual Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. Organization has a sound financial history suggesting that services will not be abruptly discontinued.
 | **16** |  |  |
| 1. The selected milestones and number of student outcomes can be reasonably completed for reimbursement based on the anticipated program schedule.
 | **17** |  |  |
| **TOTAL:** | **33** |  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Organizational Capacity***(Section IV, Subsection B)* | **Points Possible** | **Actual Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. The organization’s mission and structure are based on ethical and compliant practices and policies.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The organization has enough qualified staff to provide the proposed program
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The organization has quality experience related to providing the proposed Pre-ETS milestones and/or similar activities to the target population.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The responsibilities of all staff and personnel, including any partners, are clearly defined and appear reasonable in relation to the proposed services.
 | **9** |  |  |
| **TOTAL:** | **33** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL SCORE:** | **100** |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Final Disposition** (team decision based on averages) | **Move to Negotiate a Partnership Agreement?** |
| **Yes** | **No** | **Comments** |
|  |  |  |

### Renewal Application for Pre-ETS Community Rehabilitation Partnership Scoring Form

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Applicant:** |  | **Date of Review:** |  | **Name of Reviewer:** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Current Pre-ETS Contract #:** |  | **The applicant is in good standing with the Division(s).** | **YES** | **NO** |
|  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **ALL of the criteria in this section MUST be met for an application to continue through the review process *(RACRP, Sec III)*:** |
| **Criteria met?** | **YES** | **NO** | **Notes** |
| 1. The Applicant has a minimum of three years of related experience in the specified Pre-ETS Services with students with disabilities (either existing direct service staff, plans to recruit for experience, or appropriate supervision).
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The Applicant is a registered business with the State of North Carolina with SOSID.
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The Applicant provides policy on performing background checks with NSOR check and supervisory review of abnormalities.
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The Applicant provides an Audited Financial Statement or most recent year’s tax return.
 |  |  |  |
|  |  |
| **Minimum qualification disposition:** | **Continue review?** |
| **YES** | **NO** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **The criteria in this section shall be reviewed and scored by the RACRP evaluation team members:** |
| **Programmatic Requirements and Priorities** *(Section IV, Subsections A, C-G)* | **Possible Points** | **Actual Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. The application is detailed in explaining any changes to the specific targeted population.
 | **5** |  |  |
| 1. There is evidence of the Applicant’s ability to access the specified targeted population of students with disabilities.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The application describes clearly any changes to the location of services, and locations are compliant with state and federal policies and regulations.
 | **5** |  |  |
| 1. The standard Pre-ETS milestones selected are expected to fill service needs in the targeted service area(s) for the targeted student population.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The proposed curricula, tools, and assessments are expected to meet the needs of the targeted student population in providing the standard Pre-ETS milestones.
 | **8** |  |  |
| **TOTAL:** | **34** |  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Financial Soundness***(Section III; Section IV, Subsection E)* | **Possible Points** | **Actual Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. Organization has a sound financial history suggesting that services will not be abruptly discontinued.
 | **16** |  |  |
| 1. The selected milestones and number of student outcomes can be reasonably completed for reimbursement based on the anticipated program schedule.
 | **17** |  |  |
| **TOTAL:** | **33** |  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Organizational Capacity***(Section IV, Subsection B)* | **Points Possible** | **Actual Score** | **Comments** |
| 1. The organization’s mission and structure are based on ethical and compliant practices and policies.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The organization has enough qualified staff to provide the proposed program.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The organization has quality experience related to providing the proposed Pre-ETS milestones and/or similar activities to the target population.
 | **8** |  |  |
| 1. The responsibilities of all staff and personnel, including any partners, are clearly defined and appear reasonable in relation to the proposed services.
 | **9** |  |  |
| **TOTAL:** | **33** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL SCORE:** | **100** |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Final Disposition** (team decision based on averages) | **Move to Negotiate a Partnership Agreement?** |
| **Yes** | **No** | **Comments** |
|  |  |  |

1. Applicants who are awarded funds shall agree to maintain and make available for review the organization/agency’s background check policies, background check reports, and written evidence of supervisory review and acknowledgement of any convictions/abnormalities at the request of the Division(s). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Entities holding a subminimum wage certificate under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act shall not engage students in sub-minimum wage operations through Pre-ETS services by having these students to participate in, job shadow, or explore as a job option sub-minimum wage work. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The Applicant shall list any curricula, tools or assessments that will be used in service delivery. These curricula and tools/assessmentsmust be approved by the Division(s) as a part of negotiating an award, if awarded, and ongoing as a part of contract administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Synchronous services are preferred over asynchronous services. In the event of a government issued State of Emergency, asynchronous and/or remote mediums may be allowed or required.. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Service delivery is limited to the provider’s (1) access to the student with a disability based on coordination with entities such as the student’s school, (2) student’s continued status as a *student with a disability*, (3) active Division referral for services, and (4) student’s continued interest in participation. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)