

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
EMPLOYMENT RELATED SERVICES FOR
PROJECTS NOW, TOP & POP

RFP Number # 08094VF

RFP Release Date: September 5, 2008
Revised: **September 16, 2008***

Deadline for Proposal Submission: September 26, 2008

Return RFP Response to: Program Support Unit
Department of Social Services
95 Franklin Street, Room 866
Buffalo, NY 14202

Inquiry Contact: Tricia Dittmer
Systems Support Unit
Phone: (716) 858-6797
Patricia.Dittmer@erie.gov

- **See Page 4 Item V. Section A.
Should be Twenty (20) % of 1,800.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) is seeking proposals from qualified agencies interested in providing a comprehensive set of employment-related services to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients. As well, in an attempt to prevent recidivism, recently employed former TANF recipients will be provided with a variety of services. In addition, the contractor will provide monitoring and case management services to Workfare participants.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to secure the services of an agency to provide employment services to the three (3) distinct TANF populations for the period January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009.

III. TARGETED GROUPS and PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The ECDSS will refer approximately 3,000 individuals as delineated below. Three (3) distinct populations; A, B & C will be targeted with program services geared to the needs of each as described below:

- A. 1,800 NOW Clients** (Sanctioned TANF recipients)
- B. 700 TOP Clients** (TANF Case Closures-Transitions to Employment)
- C. 500 POP Clients** (Workfare Participants Assigned to County Parks Opportunity Program)

A. The NOW Project:

Project NOW is designed to serve TANF recipients who are deemed “employable” by the ECDSS, the vast majority of whom are “sanctioned” clients. The project is aptly referred to as “NOW” to reflect the fact that referred customers are offered immediate subsidized employment. Failure to accept the offer of employment or subsequent loss of employment through employee non-compliance is immediately reported to the ECDSS and may result in case closure.

The contract agency will become the “employer of record”, providing minimum-wage, fulltime subsidized employment at various worksites. Project NOW is intended as a “try-out” employment model. Employees who demonstrate job proficiency and job-keeping skills are quickly moved into unsubsidized positions with private or public sector employers. The project goal is to obtain unsubsidized employment for the recipient within ten (10) weeks of the

subsidized placement. However, up to twelve (12) weeks of subsidy (at a maximum) may be provided.

All barriers or potential barriers to employment are to be immediately addressed by the contract agency on the first day of employment and as they may subsequently arise. The employee is assisted in obtaining all available community work supports; i.e., child care, transportation, health benefits, housing, tax credits, etc. Intensive case management and job development services continue to be provided on an on-going basis until the employee either secures unsubsidized employment or is referred back to ECDSS as a result of non-compliance or other issues. Daily attendance and punctuality is monitored.

B. TOP Case Closures (Transitional Opportunities Program):

The purpose of this program is to assist former TANF recipients who have transitioned to employment and whose cases have recently closed due to excess income to prevent their recidivism. These individuals may continue to face a multitude of barriers to retaining employment or expanding employment situations. Many of these barriers can be removed or minimized with proper direction and approaches to problem solving.

It is well recognized that recruitment of this population has proven very difficult, both locally and State-wide. To encourage program participation, the contract agency will implement and carry out a variety of outreach approaches and offer various program incentives to this population.

This model will provide case-by-case, individualized problem-solving approach to identifying and eliminating barriers to continued or improved employment. Assistance will be offered in an attempt to actively assist low-income workers in obtaining all available community support services and/or educational or vocational assistance to obtain or sustain family self-sufficiency.

The contractor, in addition to providing services for up to 700 new referrals will provide supportive services to the 1,500 currently designated TOP cases.

C. POP (Parks Opportunity Program):

This is a work experience program designed to provide TANF recipients with employment skills through job training in various job disciplines at Erie County and Olmstead Parks. In addition, work performed by the program participants will improve the safety and aesthetics of our parks.

The job experience and skills gained will enhance the participant's likelihood of obtaining unsubsidized employment. The contract agencies staff will act as work site coordinators and case managers to facilitate the objective of the individual obtaining unsubsidized employment and moving toward self-sufficiency.

Failure by the TANF recipient to participate in a work assignment at the Parks can result in case sanctions. Therefore, to support the administrative and client management complications inherent in a program of this nature, the contract agency will work in concert with the Parks worker and ECDSS liaison to monitor attendance and provide case management services to the TANF recipient.

IV. REPORTING:

Customer participation and compliance reports will be reported to the ECDSS on a daily basis in formats agreed upon with the ECDSS.

A Cumulative Monthly Report indication participation volume and activities for all targeted groups will be submitted to the ECDSS. This report will respond to ECDSS specified reporting criteria. As well, additional reports will be provided as requested by the ECDSS.

V. PERFORMANCE MATRIX

- A. NOW:** Twenty (20) % of the 1,800 referred clients must be placed into subsidized employment. Of those placed into subsidized employment the contractor is required to place 50% of that population into unsubsidized employment.
- B. TOP:** This population requires transitional benefit case management. Contractor needs to ensure that 80% of the 700 referred cases remain off public assistance.
- C. POP:** Contractor is required to serve 500 clients and ensure that 65% of the referrals to this program are engaged and fully participating.

VI. FUNDING

The Erie County Department of Social Services is making \$950,000 available for the contract to provide Employment Related Services for Projects NOW, TOP & POP.

VII. REQUIREMENTS

1. All bidders must verify that they have been in operation for five years.
2. All bidders are required to provide the names of at least three organizations for which they have provided similar services for at least three years.
3. The name, address and phone number of an appropriate contact person in each organization must be provided.
4. All bidders must provide the details of at least three programs through which the organization served a population similar to that which this program will serve.
5. All bidders must disclose any negative findings or any adverse contingency notes from their audited financial statements for the last three years.

VIII. INVITATION

The Erie County Department of Social Services invites interested, qualified organizations to submit a proposal for Employment Related Services for Projects NOW, TOP & POP.

Any inquiries to this RFP must be directed, in writing to Tricia Dittmer, Systems Support Specialist, 95 Franklin, Room 864, Buffalo, New York 14202. Phone : (716) 858-6797 FAX: (716) 858-7205. E-Mail: Patricia.Dittmer@erie.gov.

IX. VENDOR PROPOSAL

The following sections should be included in the proposal:

1. Program Narrative - A description of the program, services and activities that will be provided.
2. Provider Experience – Agencies should detail past experiences and successes in administering services to this population. Agency should describe readiness and ability to implement and staff the program in a timely manner.
3. Budget – Agency must include a detailed budget for operation of program detailing staff costs for delivery of service.

X. INSTRUCTIONS

1. Those submitting proposals do so entirely at their own expense.
2. The County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted in response to its RFP.
3. Proposals will be blind graded. Respondents are to submit six copies of the entire proposal with only a separate cover letter indicating the name of the respondent.
4. The proposals and cover letter must be filed with the Erie County Department of Social Services, Program Support Unit, Room 866, 95 Franklin Street, Buffalo, New York, 14202, in a sealed envelope which is clearly marked on the outside, **RFP # 08094VF** no later than September 26, 2008.
5. All respondents must be able to comply with Erie County insurance requirements.

XI. SELECTION PROCEDURE

Bid proposals must meet all of the criteria described in this request for proposals. Any proposal that does not meet all criteria will be disqualified. Those proposals that meet all criteria will be evaluated by a Selection Committee on the following factors:

1. Quality of the proposal (weighted at 10%).
2. Cost factors (weighted at 10%).
3. Experience in similar projects (weighted at 25%).
4. Familiarity with target population (weighted at 25%).
5. Quality of skill / vocational training and job services offered (weighted at 30%).

The proposals will be blind graded. The selection committee may request additional information, clarification and /or an interview. It may permit correction of errors or omissions under certain circumstances. The selection committee will make a decision as to which of the bidders it will recommend to the Commissioner of Social Services who will make the final decision which is subject to Erie County Legislature approval.

X. FINAL SELECTION

A subsequent contract will be subject to approval by the Erie County Executive, the Erie County Legislature, and the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority.