

PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR REFUGEES & ASYLEES

FIA/ORA-10-465-S

HELD AT

THE BALTIMORE RESETTLEMENT CENTER

ON

FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2009

FROM

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11:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M.

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. KNOX: Welcome. I thank everybody for coming out and having patience with our situation with the court reporter.

My name is Roland Knox. I'm DHR Procurement Specialist for this RFP for Refugees & Asylee Employment Services.

We're going to have a roundtable introduction and we will start with Mr. Ford.

MR. FORD: My name is Martin Ford. I am Deputy Director of the Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees within the Department of Human Resources.

MS. CHERNIN: My name is Elizabeth Chernin. I'm with the Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees.

MR. YEHEYIS: My name is Asnake Yeheyis. I am with Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees.

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MS. SCHILLER: Hi. I'm Jennifer Schiller,  
Program Coordinator with Lutheran Social Services.

MR. WARREN: Larrie Warren, Director of  
Refugee & Immigrant Services with Lutheran Social  
Services of the National Capitol Area.

MS. SEWELL: Durlyn Sewell, Department of  
Human Resources Work Programs.

MR. WARWICK: Robert Warwick, Director of  
IRC at the Baltimore Regional Office.

MS. DELVISCIO: Erica DelViscio, Development  
Manager for IRC Baltimore.

MS. STADLER: Kathy Stadler. I'm the  
Professional Counselor at Maryland New Directions.

MS. BARR: Yvonne Barr from the DHR  
Procurement Division.

MS. ECTOR: Aretha Ector, Assistant Attorney  
General with DHR.

MR. SY: Mamadou Sy, Program Coordinator  
with Lutheran Social Services, Baltimore Office.

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MR. STORM: Daniel Storm (phonetic), Staff  
Consultant with Refugee Works.

THE REPORTER: You guys are going to have to  
step forward. I can't hear you. Sorry. If you hold  
that over there, I can hear.

MR. STORM: Daniel Storm with Refugee Works.  
Too loud?

THE REPORTER: I heard you loud and clear.

MR. STORM: Okay.

THE REPORTER: You can just hold it right  
there and let them speak.

MR. DAY: Vi Day (phonetic), Executive  
Director, International Rescue Committee, Silver  
Spring.

MR. CURRY: Louis Curry, Deputy Executive  
Director, Family Investment Administration.

MR. LIN: Ed Lin, the Director of the  
Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees.

MR. INGRAM: Larry Ingram, Maryland

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Department of Human Resources, Program Manager of  
Hiring Agreements.

THE REPORTER: Thanks.

MR. KNOX: Okay. And thank you all for  
coming out for the RFP.

Because of our situation, we're going to  
have to move the agenda around a little bit and let  
Mr. Ingram come forward and give his presentation on  
the hiring agreement.

MR. INGRAM: Good morning. And thank you,  
Roland. And thank you so much for remembering hiring  
agreements in the RFP.

Again, I'm Larry Ingram. I'll come back.

THE REPORTER: There's a seat there.

MR. INGRAM: Thank you.

Again, I'm Larry Ingram. And I'd like to  
ask, first of all, how many are familiar with -- how  
many of the -- how many of the bidders are familiar  
with hiring agreements?

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(Whereupon, there was a show of hands.)

MR. INGRAM: Well, if you will look at your folder. I've handed out a folder for everyone.

MS. BARR: You can also turn to RFP, Section 2.37.

MR. INGRAM: On the left-hand side of the folder -- we have some additional folders if needed -- on the left-hand side of the folder, you will see a solicitation clause which is a requirement of the State Financing and Procurement Office, Section 13-224. This is a requirement for the bidder selected for this RFP.

And it reads thusly: Solicitation clause hiring agreement. By submitting a bid for proposal in response to this solicitation, the bidder or offeror agrees to execute and comply with the enclosed Maryland Department of Human Resources' hiring agreement.

The hiring agreement is to be executed by

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the bidder or offeror and delivered to the Procurement Officer within ten days following receipt of notice by the bidder or offeror that it is being recommended for contract award. The hiring agreement will become effective concurrently with the award of the contract.

The hiring agreement provides that the contractor and the Maryland Department of Human Resources will work cooperatively to promote hiring by the contractor of qualified Maryland Temporary Cash Assistance recipients to fill job openings resulting from this procurement in accordance with Section 13-224 of the Maryland State Financing and Procurement Article.

And what that simply means is if you are the awardee of this contract, should job openings occur as a result of this contract, you're required by the Procurement Article to forward those job openings to the Maryland Department of Human Resources and work along with the local departments of Social Services to

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offer these job openings to qualified Maryland  
Temporary Cash Assistance recipients.

Question or comment?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

MR. INGRAM: Should your organization have  
an opening and forward information that you do need to  
employ one or more persons, at that time, our office  
will review the Temporary Cash Assistance or TCA  
recipients to find someone who qualifies according to  
your job specifications.

If we cannot find someone, then we will  
provide you with a waiver saying for this position or  
these positions, you are free to hire whomever you  
wish. We've exhausted the process and you are not  
required to forward any additional information for  
this or these positions.

Questions or comments?

MR. SY: This is Mamadou Sy, Program  
Coordinator for the Baltimore Office.

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Many agencies also have an internal policy that says if there is an opening, position should be posted internally for the week prior to being posted outside.

Would that not be a conflict between those two policies?

MR. INGRAM: Yes, I would say that it would be. However, in this situation and I can -- I stand to be corrected, Maryland law prevails.

And in my experience, the only time -- the only thing that I've read that allows a company to hire someone in their company that they're familiar with is in those cases perhaps if they were -- someone was laid off and then they would be offered the position first.

MR. WARWICK: Robert Warwick from the International Rescue Committee.

I'm just wondering, in the document here, it talks about cooperatively working together in terms of

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determining qualification.

Is that something that would be an exchange between the two agencies or is it something that would be determined solely by DHR and then informing the contractor?

MR. INGRAM: Not at all. If you look on the right-hand side of the folder, you'll see a -- you'll see the DHR hiring agreement job order forms in bill 686. The company, you the bidder, you would tell us what the qualifications are and we would try to meet them, but no DHR or no other department really participates in advising or interfering with what your company deems the qualifications.

MS. BARR: There are also tax credits for hiring someone.

MR. INGRAM: All right. If you will look at the second item on the left-hand side of your folder, this is actually -- this is the actual hiring agreement. In other words, it's an addendum contract,

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if you will, to the RFP as stated earlier and it --  
the time frame is that it works concurrently with the  
contract you're bidding for.

If you will pay particular attention to page  
three, line item five, it says agree to consider  
filling a minimum of blank of the jobs opening with  
the local department referring candidates provided  
that the local department refers qualified candidates  
within three working days.

I brought this to your attention because we  
need you to put a number in this blank. Without a  
number there, we'll call you up and say, hey, the  
contract isn't valid without inputting a number there.

And I want to say this also. This is a  
user-friendly system. There have been situations  
where companies had a number, but didn't hire anyone.  
Yet, they were deemed as working in good faith.

Sometimes employment will develop and  
sometimes it will not even though in the current

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economy, perhaps no one has staff waiting around or sitting around waiting for work to come in, but it does happen.

If you will continue to look on the right-hand side of the folder, you'll see on the front, it says Family Investment Administration hiring agreement. This is a facsimile of the intro letter your company will be sent introducing you to the program.

And directly beneath that, you'll see the recruitment information and instructions for hiring agreement contractors. These are the basic steps and things that happen with this process. And it's very simple.

Once you've signed the contract as well as -  
- submit your contract as well as the hiring agreement contract and we receive it, we will sign it, forward a copy back to you. We'll send you the intro packet. We'll send you a form whereby you fill out should

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employment arise. We will also send you, also on the right-hand side, the vendor placement report.

There may be situations where you send in a job spec sheet and we forward to you candidates to be interviewed. These candidates are to be interviewed as you interview anyone else. And we ask that should they not be hired that you just provide a brief description as to why. All right?

And last but not least, as Yvonne has stated, there are benefits to hiring the Maryland Temporary Cash Assistance recipient, because there are tax incentives, and especially if you're a nonprofit, that you know that your organization can receive up to \$8,500 for hiring a Temporary Cash Assistance recipient.

This is over two years. The last sheet on the right-hand side reflects this. And the process for filing for this tax credit is simple. And we are available to help you with that.

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And so we feel that it's a good Procurement Article. We feel it's a win-win for everyone. But it is required by Maryland law also. I want to say that.

May I have your questions or comments, please?

MR. FORD: Yes. Martin Ford from the Office for New Americans for Refugees & Asylees.

You mentioned nonprofit. The tax credit applies to nonprofits as well as private businesses?

MR. INGRAM: No. Basically they're for private businesses.

MR. FORD: Okay.

MR. INGRAM: I think that by their standards, they wouldn't have a use or a need for their workers.

I'd like to leave my phone number. I did have some cards. I don't know whether your folder has a card in it or not. Later I found out that some had them and some didn't.

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But, again, I'm Larry Ingram. I'm the Program Manager of Hiring Agreements at the Maryland Department of Human Resources. And I can be reached on 410-767-8188.

However, if you have a question, you should forward your question directly to Mr. Roland Knox if it's regarding hiring agreements or any other matter in this RFP and he will forward the question to our office. We will give an answer. That will go to the AG Office for Legal Sufficiency and then an answer will be provided.

All right. I want to thank you so very much for your time.

And thank you again, Roland, for including us.

MR. KNOX: Thank you for coming, Larry.

Also that attachment, hiring agreement attachment is in your RFP, it's Attachment R, which you will use when you submit your RFP.

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Okay. We're going to try to get back on track and have Mr. Ford give some opening remarks.

MR. FORD: Again, I'm Martin Ford, Deputy Director of the Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees. And I'm here with two colleagues who will hopefully address questions along with me, Elizabeth Chernin and Asnake Yeheyis.

I thought -- the RFP is quite comprehensive and detailed, but I thought I would give you the briefest of backgrounds and then, of course, be willing to fill in between the lines, so to speak, with answers to whatever questions you might have.

MORA is a state agency within the Department of Human Resources, but we're federally funded to provide what are called adjustment services to refugees, a specific subset of the immigrant population.

We're part of a network of offices that do this with federal funding from the Department of

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Health and Human Services.

Refugees are, as I noted, just a small fraction of the overall immigrant population and they differ from the immigrant population in a lot of ways. Very few are Hispanic. Very few are Spanish speakers. They come from a shifting range of countries. Now the largest groups coming nationally into Maryland, maybe not in this order, are Bhutanese, Burmese, Iraqis, and people from a variety of African countries.

Our charge from the federal government is to help them become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. We don't do that directly. We contract for services.

Primarily to get these people on their feet, we contract for English language instruction and services that will get them jobs, employment services.

Now, this RFP concerns soliciting two contracts, each of five-year duration, one in the Baltimore area, which would be run from here, the

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Baltimore Resettlement Center. And when I say Baltimore area, I'm speaking of a six jurisdiction locale, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Harford, Howard. Is that it? Those counties.

The other contract is for, we sometimes say Suburban Washington, D.C., but, in fact, it's two counties, Montgomery County and Prince George's Counties. That is run from the Suburban Washington Resettlement Center.

You'll have the opportunity, those of you who are interested, we said two hours after this meeting, to visit the SWRC, as we call it, the Suburban Washington Resettlement Center. So before the meeting ends, please indicate if you'd want to do that and we will meet you there this afternoon.

Now, in terms of employment services, we're talking of a pretty wide spectrum of activities from outreach and one would think that there would be no

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need to outreach for refugees since most of them, if you've read the RFP, will be escorted into this country through the voluntary agencies, through resettlement agencies.

But in Maryland, under that rubric of refugee, we include political asylees, people who are entitled to the same benefits as refugees, but they come here under slightly different circumstances. And we expect outreach from our employment services in order to reach them.

They aren't under the wing, so to speak, of resettlement agencies. They file for their -- they file for protection while they're here, usually under some other Visa, student Visa, business Visa, visitor's Visa.

If they -- if their case is successfully adjudicated, they're given status that entitles them to the same eight months of intensive services from federal funding.

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After outreach, we expect intake and assessment, that employment services will in consultation with the client look at the client's background, speak to them about where they come from, what sort of education they have, what they like to do, what they'd want to do, and from that consultation arrive at a pretty good idea of what to expect in terms of possible employment.

Now, in order to know what to expect, we want the employment services to have developed jobs, to work with employers in building up a reservoir of jobs. So the employment service provider would have contacts throughout, say, the Baltimore area for that contract with the hotel industry, with light manufacturer, with a variety of different employers developing jobs. We expect real shoe-leather work in terms of job placement, to work hard to get these refugees jobs. And when I speak of refugee, it's covering a broad diversity of people who might

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range from that single mother with three children who comes from Sudan, has never worked a formal job before, may not speak English, may not even be numerate, all right, may not be literate, doesn't believe she can do anything in terms of -- she has worked and she's managed a household, but she doesn't have confidence that she can hold a job.

Now, that would be on one end of the spectrum. On the other end of the spectrum, we're talking about clients who might have been college professors, engineers, doctors in their home countries. So it's not a one-size-fits-all sort of service.

After placement, we expect follow-up, especially, say, with the college professor. There's a -- the tendency is to urge refugees, even those who are fairly well educated, well, get that job even if it's below your usual expectation. From that job, you should be able to get another one and we'll help you

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get another one after you've gotten your foot in the door, so to speak.

So follow-up will be done and we expect retention. We are judged by the federal government on a number of indices including 90-day retention.

The contract would start October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and run five years. What does that take us to, 2014, September, September 13<sup>th</sup> -- 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

One phrase that you'll notice that comes up a great deal in the RFP is variations on this, linguistically and culturally appropriate. We are under guidelines, I shouldn't call them guidelines, we are required by the federal government to serve our clients with staff that speak their languages. All right?

And because those languages shift, there's a churning of staff usually over the years, but we expect whoever would be a successful bidder to hire staff that speak different languages, understand the

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cultures these people are coming from and serve them in, to use that phrase again, linguistically and culturally appropriate ways.

Now, in terms of -- that's basically the substance of the contract that we would hope to achieve, but in terms of reporting and in terms of outcomes, my colleagues could answer whatever questions and may want to say something now.

MR. YEHEYIS: What -- as part of the -- my name is Asnake Yeheyis and I am the Research Statistician for MORA. I'm responsible for the processing the data that comes from all service providers.

If you have read the RFP and if you have any questions, I would be willing to respond to those questions.

But we have outcomes that are required and we collect data on a weekly and on a monthly basis. There are standard forms and there's a set of

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instructions to accompany those forms.

So I don't have to go into details. If you have any questions, I would be willing to respond for your questions.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

MR. KNOX: Okay. Thank you all for that.

I'm going to continue with the review of the proposal sections at which point, we will get into the actual proposal.

You notice the first page is notice to vendor and contractors. If you are not planning to bid, we would like for you to submit this form anyway and give us your specific reason why you're not going to be bidding.

Also, please note that in order to receive a contract, the vendor must be registered with eMaryland Marketplace. And you can register at their web site which is [www.emarylandmarketplace.com](http://www.emarylandmarketplace.com).

MS. BARR: eMaryland Marketplace

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registration is free.

MR. KNOX: If you turn your attention to page one, which is the summary objective section. And it states the Maryland Department of Human Resources Family Investment Administration, Maryland Office for Refugees & Asylees, MORF, intends to award two contracts to provide employment services for legal refugees living in, one, Baltimore area including Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties, and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Employment services to refugees in the Baltimore area will be offered from the Baltimore Resettlement Center, which is where we are now, and services to refugees in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties will be offered from the Suburban Washington Resettlement Center.

Office space or space provision includes certain amenities, see Section 3.2C and D, is being

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provided by MORA and the BRC and the SWRC. See address below in Section 1.3.

The small minority of refugees residing outside of the regional jurisdictions above are served by departments of Social Services, local sponsors, and other resettlement agencies.

Employment services are defined as direct services that assist an employable adult in preparation for and development of placement in or maintenance of employment. Services include outreach, intake, and assessment, job placement, job retention, and job upgrade services when appropriate.

Only one contract will be awarded for each regional jurisdiction listed above for a five-year period beginning on or about October 1, 2009 and ending September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

An offeror may submit a proposal for more than one jurisdiction. However, an offeror may not submit more than one proposal for the same

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jurisdiction.

Each proposal must be bound separately and prepared in accordance with Section 4 of this RFP which we will go over later.

Keep in mind that I am the sole point of contact, Roland Knox, should you have any questions regarding this RFP.

Closing date for the RFP is June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at four p.m. An original to be so identified, four copies of the technical proposal and financial proposal must arrive in the Procurement Office by four p.m., June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Again, it must be there by four p.m., June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009. One minute -- that's eastern standard time. One minute after, it will be rejected. So it's very important that you do not be late. You can be early, but don't be late.

The State Project Manager for this proposal is Mr. Martin Ford. After the contract is awarded, he

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will serve as the sole point of contact.

Again, the term of this contract is from October 1, 2009 through September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014. If the term does not start on October the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, the contract will still end September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

There is an MBE goal established for this contract which is three percent. And we will have a presentation on the MBE section shortly.

That's pretty much -- oh, I need to talk about this point. Are there any questions?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

MR. KNOX: Oh, there is one other thing, the living wage requirement, which is Section 2.36. The contract resulting from this solicitation has been determined to be a Tier 1 contract in regards to the living wage law. And as you read it, you will understand what that means. It's a Tier 1 contract.

And if there are no more questions, I'd like to turn it over to Ms. Yvonne Barr for the minority

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business presentation.

MS. BARR: I am not from the Minority Business Office, but I am going to speak on their behalf.

Like Roland said, there's a three percent MBE goal in this procurement. And I don't know if any of the core services can be subcontracted, but they do envision, MORA does envision using subcontracting for supplies, printing, computer equipment, that kind of a thing.

The MBE goal, if you do not believe you can meet the three percent goal, you may submit a waiver. All of the MBE language is in Section 226 down to Section 231.

You do have to fill out the forms. There's a minority business enterprise form, Attachment F. You are required to complete it and submit it.

There is an MBE affidavit. If you do not fill the affidavit out and the MBE participation

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schedule, I think that's Attachment H and G, your proposal can be deemed not acceptable for receiving award, just for not completing those forms, and if you don't complete them accurately and if you don't submit them. So you do have to comply.

If you are notified of award, we give you ten days to submit who your MBEs are actually going to be. Your MBE participation statement, it's a little contract that accompanies the MBE participation schedule. The statement is not submitted until you're notified that you're being recommended for award. And you do have ten days after notification or recommendation for award to submit your MBE documentation.

If at any time after the contract is started or even before the award is made you need to change your MBEs, if you need to change them before award is made, you can contact Mr. Knox immediately. If you need to change your MBEs after award is made, it has

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to be done so through a contract modification.

You will have to submit a letter of justification. That letter should be sent to the Program and the Program will get it to the Procurement Division as well as to the MBE Office. And the MBE Office will make the determination as to whether the change is appropriate or not.

If the MBE Office says that the change is appropriate, then a contract modification will be executed. And it has to be approved by the Department Secretary. If the MBE Office does not approve the change, then the change cannot be made.

You can -- like I said, you can submit a waiver if you feel that you cannot meet the MBE goal. There are a lot of -- there's a lot of documentation that has to be submitted with the waiver. And that is in Section 230, letter F.

If you do not submit the requested documentation to substantiate the waiver, it will be

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rejected and the goal will still have to be met.

Section 2.30, letter F.

Also, the State has a prompt payment policy.

If after the contract is executed we find that you have outstanding bills that are owed, that haven't been paid to the subcontractors, the State can pay those bills and subtract that payment from your check from the State or your payment from the State. And that's in Section 231.

All MBE information is reported to the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs. And believe me, Governor O'Malley is very interested in his State's MBE participation. He is very big on it.

Are there any MBEs here today?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

MS. BARR: No? No MBEs. Okay.

We encourage networking as much as possible and we do try to take the effort to invite MBEs to all of our pre-proposal conferences for that purpose,

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because we do want to engage competition and we do want the economy to keep moving.

Are there any questions? Yes.

MS. DELVISCIO: Erica DelViscio with IRC.

Could you just clarify Section 2.35, which is the nonprofit affirmation?

MS. BARR: What page is that?

MS. DELVISCIO: It's on page 23, 2.35. I understand that you can fill out this attachment if a nonprofit --

MS. BARR: Yes.

MS. DELVISCIO: -- in effect meets --

MS. BARR: Who are nonprofits.

MS. DELVISCIO: -- meets the requirements of an MBE, but is not --

MS. BARR: Correct.

MS. DELVISCIO: -- an MBE. Is that meant to be --

MS. BARR: The nonprofit affirmation is not

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just if you are an MBE. Nonprofits --

MS. DELVISCIO: Right.

MS. BARR: -- usually aren't MBEs.

MS. DELVISCIO: Right. Yes. I understand that the attachments for a nonprofit to fill out if in effect they are an MBE in --

MS. BARR: Regardless of whether you're an MBE.

MS. DELVISCIO: Right.

MS. BARR: It's not -- it is not connected to MBE.

MS. DELVISCIO: That waiver is -- I mean, that attachment is to be filled out by --

MS. BARR: Any nonprofit.

MS. DELVISCIO: -- the -- the --

MS. BARR: Wait a minute.

MS. DELVISCIO: -- agency who's providing the services or the one that -- or another agency that we're contracting with is my question?

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MS. BARR: No. The agency that would be the prime contractor.

MS. DELVISICIO: Okay. So those who are applying for the bid?

MS. BARR: Correct.

MS. DELVISICIO: Okay.

MR. WARWICK: Robert Warwick, International Rescue Committee.

If there is a situation where there was no payment to a subcontractor, would the Office of Minority Employment communicate with the prime to discover why?

For instance, I mean, you know, there may be an agreement within a contract that says if certain benchmarks are not achieved by the subcontractor. I'm just wondering if there's a negotiating process or some sort of process before that would -- those funds would be deducted from the prime's contract?

MS. ECTOR: I'm not aware that there is in

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this -- within the waiver positions. I'm sorry.  
Aretha Ector. There is a process where the prime contractor would have an opportunity to address the issue of nonpayment.

And I believe the terminology is if it's not a valid dispute, because there could, in fact, be a valid dispute as to whether or not services were actually provided, in those circumstances, the State would not step in and make payment if, in fact, there was a dispute.

MS. BARR: And in Section 231, letter B, it says an undisputed amount. So this would be payment for undisputed amounts.

Any additional questions?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

MR. KNOX: All right. Thank you, Yvonne.

Moving along in the agenda, we have Section 3 of the proposal which are specifications. And Mr. Ford will do a summary of that.

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MR. FORD: As I noted, employment services involve a broad spectrum of activities from determining the client, whether the client is, in fact, eligible for the services or not.

We serve refugees who are defined in the RFP. You'll note that the glossary at the front of the RFP includes virtually every definition that you might have a problem with.

We require the immigration status of every client to be checked. That involves checking the I-94 form that every refugee should have with him or her.

Refugees, as I mentioned, include political asylees and some other minority immigrants who are -- those designations are defined in the RFP as well.

The employment services themselves, again, are intensive and one might say very closely focused including, say, taking the refugee to a job interview, driving with that refugee to the job interview, working closely with employers, visiting workplaces,

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checking up to see how the clients, the refugees are doing, following up, staying with them at least through the 90-day retention period.

In terms of specific specifications, well, I would just refer you the RFP if you have any questions. It is quite detailed.

You'll note that there are -- there's language regarding hiring bicultural, bilingual women. We want to see a diverse workplace in terms of gender.

We'd like to see for each client a plan developed. You'll see reference to the FFSP, the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan. That's done by the agency that actually brings the refugee into the country. Employment services are understood to work with that and to develop individual employment plans with the refugees.

One of the problems that we encounter is that refugees often have very high unrealistic expectations and a great deal of time sometimes must

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be spent in orienting the refugees to the realities of the American workplace.

Because the services will be located -- no, I shouldn't say because services will be located in this center -- we specifically situated services, employment services here along with other services because we expect interaction.

We have English language instruction offered through the center. We have case management offered through the center.

Across the street, we have Baltimore Medical Systems. The refugees get their health screenings there.

We expect a real collaboration among partners. With ESL, we expect employment services to be meeting with them and is stipulated in the RFP how often, to be referring clients to English language instruction, to check on the progress of clients, how they're doing with English.

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This, again, is part of being close with the client and understanding fully their clients' capabilities.

As I noted, everything is stipulated in the RFP pretty specifically. I'd urge you to look at it and if you have any questions, specific questions, let me know, let us know.

MR. KNOX: If there aren't any questions --

MS. DELVISCIO: Yes.

MR. KNOX: Yes, ma'am.

MS. DELVISCIO: Erica DelViscio, IRC. I do have a question.

In Section 4G, which is the economic benefit to the state of Maryland, my question is, are we to project benefits for clients as well as staff paid through this contract?

MS. ECTOR: Yes, you can.

MS. DELVISCIO: Okay.

MS. ECTOR: Any benefit to the state

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economy.

MS. DELVISCIO: Staff and clients. Okay.

MS. BARR: And one thing I wanted to back up about MBEs, they have to be certified by the Department of Transportation in order to qualify for these contracts or for this contract. So there is a web site address for you to go on to MDOT's web site to the minority business directory.

And Roland is going to go through Section 4 to talk about proposal preparation.

MR. KNOX: Turn your attention to Section 4, page 38. Again, an original and four copies of the technical and financial proposal is due in the Procurement Office on June 16<sup>th</sup>, by four p.m. And the Procurement Office is located at 311 West Saratoga Street, Room 946. That is in the RFP. So it's not this building. It's in DHR Headquarters, 311 Saratoga Street, Baltimore.

Okay. So the first step in preparation for

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the proposal, and I'll be reading this verbatim, is transmittal letter.

MS. BARR: Let's just go over -- if you want me to work -- do this, I will.

MR. KNOX: Okay. Go ahead.

MS. BARR: Okay. It's very important that you follow our proposal preparation instructions. It's nothing like having to look at someone's proposal and you have to hunt and peck for the information.

It tells you the first -- it tells you there are two volume submissions. One is your technical proposal, one will be your financial proposal. They should come to us in two separately sealed envelopes.

Sometimes people come to the building and they are -- we will give you an envelope to put it in. But if you don't, you will be disqualified because it's not supposed to be -- the financial information should not be disclosed.

We want a transmittal letter. A transmittal

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letter is supposed to convey any -- your title, your solicitation number, your phone number, contact information, and acknowledge any addendum to the contract or to the RFP that we put out prior to the closing date.

Your proposal should have a section that says proposed service. In the proposed service section, you're going to be detailing everything that's in the requirements in Section 3. And we want it in the same sequence. Again, it's nothing like having to hunt and peck for an answer through a proposal.

And you can, because RFPs are ranked, it's subject to the Evaluation Committee members' thoughts and their judgments on what you have said, whether you have been responsive or not to the requirements that were asked. And if they have to hunt and peck through your proposal to find a response, they may want to give you a lower rank.

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There's another section called qualifications. It's asking for your organizational structure and history, any credentials you may have, related experience your company has.

The next section is understanding the problem, what is your analysis of the environment in which the services are being asked.

If you have information on a refugee population, any demographics, any information that you have as to your understanding of the people that you are serving and the importance of this solicitation in their regard, that's what we're looking for.

We want information on your personnel. We want job descriptions and resumes. If at any time during the contract you change personnel, then we want them replaced with people of equal qualification.

We want references. You have to supply three professional references to support your proposal. The references can come in with your

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proposal. If they do, they should be in a sealed envelope from the referee, the person who's submitting it. If not, then they should come in separately. They can come to us directly from the reference source.

If you've had any other contracts with the state of Maryland, there are about six or seven items that you have to respond to in regards to those procurements.

And also, we -- if we know of any references that weren't disclosed, then we have a right to contact those references.

We're asking you to provide proof of your financial stability. There are about five or six items listed that you can supply for that purpose.

Sometimes we have to go to our fiscal unit to get an accountant or someone to look over your financial information if the Evaluation Committee doesn't have the expertise to analyze them.

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And any information that is shared outside of the Procurement Division is, and even within the Procurement Division is held in strictest confidence.

MR. WARREN: Excuse me. Could I ask a question now?

MS. BARR: Correct. Go ahead.

MR. WARREN: Larrie Warren of LSS.

Going back to what you were talking about with the references, if they're sent directly to your office, they -- we would just have to make sure that the people sending the references designate, of course --

MS. BARR: The instructions for doing that are in here, what they need to -- what they need to include in the reference.

MR. WARREN: And so other than if the -- if the references are not sent separately directly you to, you said we --

MS. BARR: They should come in a sealed

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envelope with your proposal. The reference source, it should be in the envelope from the reference source, not from you.

MR. WARREN: Right. Got you.

MS. BARR: Okay?

Economic benefits, we want percentages. We do not want to see dollars. When people send in dollars, we have to blacken that information out before it's shared with the Evaluation Committee.

If you have additional information that you would like to include that's relevant to your procurement, you can do so. However, you should reference where that material is. If you don't reference where the material is in your proposal, it does not have to be considered.

Same thing with company literature. If you have brochures or anything like that, newsletters that you want to share and be a part of your proposal, then you have -- you can include those, but you should also

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say where they are located within your proposal or if they are an appendix to your proposal.

There are certain forms that have to come in with your proposal. A bid proposal affidavit, that should be completed and signed. There are three MBE documents, a Medicare/Medicaid patient affidavit. I didn't know that. You all don't use Block Grant funds, so that's not appropriate. Okay. A certification regarding lobbying and a living wage affidavit.

Volume II is your financial proposal. We have a two-part evaluation process. We look at your technical proposal. If your technical proposal is deemed acceptable for award, then we move on and open your financial proposals.

Technical proposals are ranked separately and then we look at your financial starting with the lowest bid to the highest bid. That's how you will be ranked. The lowest bid, of course, would receive the

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highest rank. We do a combination. We look at both your technical and financial rank to determine where you rank overall.

And we -- I believe we have time. We won't -- I don't think we're in fear of not meeting the October start date. I think we have plenty of time. Yes. So --

MALE VOICE: Mark those words.

MS. BARR: Well, a lot of times, anything that can happen usually does. But I think we have plenty of time to meet the October start date.

There will be evaluation criteria listed in Section 5 in descending order of importance. Your proposed services are the main area that we're going to be looking at and evaluating, then qualifications, then your understanding of the problem, your personnel, your references, your financial stability, and any economic benefit to the State.

There are times when proposals come in over

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the State's budget and with today's economy, it's not uncommon. If that should happen, then we will ask for all acceptable offerors to submit a best and final offer.

If you are not selected for award, you are entitled to receive a debriefing. And we can only discuss at the debriefing what was technically wrong with your proposal or maybe it was a financial issue. But any request for a debriefing would have to be submitted in writing.

These procure -- any contracts resulting from this procurement will be approved by the State Board of Public Works and that does take a little while. But, again, we should be able to meet the October deadline. And once the Board of Public Works approves the proposal, the recommended award, then you will be notified to sign your contracts or you will get an executed contract.

MS. SCHILLER: Jennifer Schiller from

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Lutheran Social Services.

I didn't see any language in here about page length or double spacing, single spaced.

MS. BARR: No. We don't have any preference as far as that is concerned.

MS. SCHILLER: Okay.

MS. BARR: You didn't have any. We would like for you to have page numbers. We do receive proposals with no page numbers.

MALE VOICE: You're not thinking of eight point font, are you?

(Laughter.)

MS. BARR: They're usually no less than 12. Some of us would like to have 14, but --

MALE VOICE: Single spaced, eight point font, Martin?

MS. BARR: I think all of the attachments are here.

Does anyone have any questions?

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MS. DELVISCIO: I do, of course. Erica DelViscio, IRC. This is question for Asnake.

MR. YEHEYIS: Uh-huh.

MS. DELVISCIO: Your Attachment T.3 with clients enrolled in employment services, I just want to clarify that this is for clients who are served through the funds that are going to be available through this particular contract, so not including other employment services that are directed towards refugees.

MS. YEHEYIS: That's correct.

MS. DELVISCIO: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KNOX: Okay. And there were a few questions prior to this conference which Erica actually just asked, but we'll read them again.

One of the questions was, what is the award amount ceiling. And the answer is, all budget information is kept confidential in order to maintain competitiveness of the bidding process. So we're

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really not allowed to give out any information regarding that.

And the second question was, is there a page limitation. The answer is no.

Third question, is it required that the performance of MBE subcontractors be for direct client services only. The answer is no.

Fourth question, which she just asked, does Attachment T3 account for clients serving this funding source only. The answer was yes.

And the last question was, Section 4G, economic benefit to the state of Maryland, are we to project the benefit for clients and staff paid through the contract. The answer was yes.

So that concludes the questions that we had prior to the conference.

If you have any other questions when you leave, you can contact me and we will get an answer for you.

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MS. BARR: And please submit your questions in writing. All questions and answers will be posted on eMaryland Marketplace along with any amendments as well as the DHR web site.

MR. KNOX: And unless there are -- yes, sir.

MR. WARWICK: Robert Warwick, IRC.

Yvonne, if there are amendments, will we be notified or do we --

MS. BARR: We have everyone signed in. Hopefully you put an e-mail address on there.

What happens is, when you're registered with eMaryland Marketplace, you will -- and we do an amendment or post something, it will automatically send it to your e-mail address. If you don't -- if you're not registered on eMaryland and you have to go to the DHR web page, you don't receive any kind of notification.

But what Mr. Knox will do is he'll go back and take your business cards and we'll make an address

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file of your e-mail addresses. When we post something either place, we will let you know ahead of time that there is a posting.

So if you all have spam blockers, you know, when we -- and we go to send you something, a lot of times, we get -- it gets sent back to us because people do, then we, you know, we can't control that if you don't get our e-mail.

He can call you and let you know you need to reset something that can accept our e-mail. But, again, if you're registered with eMaryland, you'll automatically get an e-mail notification.

And eMaryland registration is good because you'll get any procurements that the State is issuing associated with whatever commodity category you're registered under. They'll automatically be sent to your e-mail address for any other bid opportunities.

MR. KNOX: Are there any more questions?

Yes, sir.

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MR. WARREN: Larrie Warren of LSS.

On your Attachments A and A1 dealing with the -- stating the financials, the five-year budgets, is there -- is it acceptable to actually put like a Cola SC escalation and the succeeding two, three, and four years on salaries?

MS. ECTOR: Yes.

MR. WARREN: That is acceptable?

MS. ECTOR: Yes. If you pay attention to -- let me see -- multi-year contract language, it's Section 2, it says we're asking -- it's on page 10 -- we're asking you to provide a fixed price for your services. And your prices will be those that you put on Attachment A and A1. So they're -- you know, it's not locked in. But, again, it is a competitive procurement.

MS. BARR: Any other questions?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

MR. FORD: All right. If there are any

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