



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
PO Box 45811, Olympia WA 98504-5811**

DATE: March 26, 2025

TO: RFP # 2513-870 Bidders

FROM: Stephaine Ssaaka, Solicitation Coordinator
DSHS Central Contracts and Legal Services

SUBJECT: Amendment No. 01 – Answers to Bidder Conference Questions,
Questions Received before the Bidder Conference, Questions
received after the Bidder Conference, Update to RFP Project
Scope, Update to Attachment A-Sample Contract Statement of
Work

DSHS amends the RFP # 2513-870 to provide guidance and answers to the questions received before the Bidder Conferences, to questions received at the Bidder Conference held on March 17, 2025, to questions received by the Solicitation Coordinator as of 3 p.m. on March 21, 2025, to provide the presentation that was given during the Bidder Conference, to update the RFP Project Scope, and to update Attachment A-Sample Contract.

Bidder's Questions and Answers
RFP #2513-870

Questions received at Bidder Conference:

Question #1: Is this a multi-award or single award contract?

A: This is a single award contract, only 1 vendor will be awarded.

Question #2: Is there an Incumbent? Are they eligible to submit a bid?

A: Support Group Central (dba Hey Peers) is the current vendor. They are eligible to submit a bid.

Question #3: Is there an end of term or mid-term evaluation report that needs to be written?

A: Monthly reports are due as attachments when submitting monthly A19, invoices for payment. See Section 9 in the Statement of Work. Year-end reports are due at the end of the fiscal year.

Question #4: The contract is for 4 years, will there be 4 year end reports or one at the end of the 4 years?

A: At the end of each fiscal year, a yearly report is due.

Question #5: Do you have an idea of what the support groups will look like? Certain length long? How will topics be determined?

A: The first question is unclear. The support groups are described in the Statement of work in Section 5, 7, and 8. There is guidance and parameters on how long each group meeting should last that will be discussed and approved by the Contract Manager. A list of topics is described in the Statement of Work, Section 5. The Vendor and Contract Manager will discuss and Contract Manager will approve of the topics.

Question #6: How do you see the educational and community elements balancing together.

A: In context of the contract, the educational elements provided through the Virtual Support groups enhances and supports the TBI community.

Question #7: How many individuals attend the Support Groups?

A: Typically 5-15 attend a Support Group.

Question #8: Is \$240,000 the annual budget or the budget for all 4 years?

A: \$ 240,000 is the budget for 4 years. Each year the budget is a maximum of \$60,000

Question #9: Do you have a list of topics that you have offered in the past that were successful?

A: We do not drive the topics, we expect the Vendor to have knowledge about the TBI Community and how to develop the topics and agendas. We will work together to make sure the topics are appropriate for the community. Section 5 of the Statement of work outlines appropriate topics.

Question #10: Since these groups have been happening for 4-5 years, are there topics that have garnered more interest from the community than others that are more frequently offered.

A: We cycle through topics depending on the groups. Each group's needs are different, and the topics are determined based on what is currently needed for each group.

Question #11: Is subcontracting allowed?

A: The vendor can subcontract out components of the contract such as independent facilitators, webpage design, trainings, etc. The vendor is responsible for the management, compliance, and assurances of all subcontracted work for the contract.

Question #12: Are topics preapproved?

A: We work with the vendor to determine topics and there is preapproval for topics to ensure community alignment and best practices are in place.

Question #13: Does TBI Council have recommended criteria?

A: The Statement of Work was drafted in consultation with a TBI Council member with expertise in conducting virtual support groups. The Executive Committee reviewed the SOW with an opportunity to contribute.

Question #14: Is the expectation that one vendor is satisfying all requirements for all meetings?

A: The vendor is responsible for the development and implementation of the contract deliverables. This includes program oversight and review of the support group meetings, including; facilitators, agendas, program development/marketing/outreach, assurances, trainings, evaluation and feedback loops, and addressing complaints.

Question #15: Are there regional meetings to ensure people familiar with community issues are facilitating groups?

A: That is something that can be discussed with the vendor to see what that would look like to ensure that the TBI community needs are being met.

Question #16: Can you describe what kind of licensure (mental health or otherwise) is or is not required of the vendor?

A: Requirements are in the RFP Statement of Work, Section 3 and 4.

Question #17: What is the DSHS Mental Health Course level 12?

A: That is an error in Section 3 of the RFP Document and the Sample Contract. It should state DSHS Mental Health level 1 course.

Question #18: Can non-profits apply?

A: Yes, non-profits can apply.

Question #19: Do you have specifics on the platform and what the requirements for security and confidentiality are on the platform?

A: This is an important piece of the contract. The vendor must provide a secure and accessible platform with a front facing webpage that is accessible and

confidential. There could be a DSHS IT Security Review required during the contracting process.

Question #20: What platforms can we use?

A: The vendor should provide a secure and accessible platform the provides information on the types of support groups offered, easy registration, confirmation, reminders, and meeting access. They should also provide additional information regarding TBI's.

Question #21: Do you know how many full time employees have been utilized to make this program successful in the past?

A: It depends on the needs of the vendor to fulfill the contract. The amount of the contract does not support full-time, dedicated staff.

Question #22: Is there a current partnership with the VA or other organizations?

A: The current vendor does-deliver Veteran specific support groups in partnership with VA or other veteran organizations.

Question #23: What happens at the end of the contract life? Will another open solicitation take place?

A: There is an option to extend the contract for an additional 2 years twice. Per the RCW, DSHS has the option to conduct an RFP process after the initial contract and/or after the extended contract. All DSHS contracts are dependent on continued funding being available.

Question #24: How are members brought into the Virtual Support Groups?

A: Section 6 of the Statement of Work speaks to the outreach and marketing. The TBI council also partners with the vendor and utilizes its partnerships, outreach, and marketing to support the VSG's.

Questions received before Bidder Conference:

Question #25: As the contract is written, would you approve a contract for 5 to 6 monthly groups or 64 groups annually?

A: No.

Question #26: Is there only one contract available?

A: Yes, for the statewide Virtual Support Group.

Questions received after Bidder Conference:

Question #27: I reviewed the numbers, and this RFP is to conduct 13 meetings per month or 156 annual meetings. Could you provide the general anticipated budget to formulate the \$5,000 monthly amount?

A: The budget can include: platform and website expenses, facilitator wages or costs, including trainings and appropriate continuing education, curriculum development, marketing and outreach, program development and management (including planning, survey, analysis, and reporting/invoicing), and administrative staff time (indirect costs).

Questions received after Bidder Conference:

Question #28: Is the maximum dollar amount of \$240,000 total for all three years, or just the initial year?

A: Up to \$240,000 for a 4-year contract. Up to \$60,000 each year.

Questions received after Bidder Conference:

Question #29: Is the bidder allowed to only include specialty groups like veterans or does the support groups have to be open to all traumatic brain injury survivors in the state of Washington?

A: The vendor needs to provide TBI virtual support groups for all people with TBI's, their families, and caretakers.

Question #30: Is the solicitation open to state agencies?

A: Yes

Question #31: The RFP assigns some points to some of their selection criteria and says that many will not be scored. How will the proposals be evaluated?

A: DSHS shall designate an evaluation team of at least 3 evaluators to review, evaluate, and score the written question responses. These evaluators will be selected based on their qualifications, experience, capability, and background. If oral interviews or presentations are conducted, additional evaluators may supplement or replace some or all the individuals performing the written evaluation. Evaluators shall assign scores up to the maximum points available. Individual evaluator points will be totaled and the average points for each Bidder will be calculated. The Bidder's average points earned for each question will be added together to determine the Bidder's total written evaluation points (RFP Document pg. 23)

Question #32: Is there a maximum number of points that could be assessed?

A: There are 710 maximum points (RFP Document pg. 23).

Question #33: One of the requirements for facilitators is stated as needing to have completed the "DSHS Mental Health Level 12 course." I only found Level 1. Did they mean Level 1?

A: That is an error in Section 3 of the RFP Document and the Sample Contract. It should state DSHS Mental Health level 1 course.

Question #34: Is the stated budget of not to exceed \$240,000 for all four years of the initial contract?

A: Up to \$240,000 for a 4-year contract. Up to \$60,000 each year.

Question #35: Upon reviewing the RFP, we have identified a counterintuitive and counterproductive item in the Program Administration section of the RFP. It was letter C on page 4 in the data reporting section. It reads: "(c) Implement a formal pre- and post-session self-assessment for participants to track progress in knowledge gain, coping strategies, and social support." We ask that this be removed from the contract. We have been conducting support groups for a long time and find this sort of inquiry is inhibitory for group attendees. Also, brain injury survivors usually have to attend the same topic or session multiple times before we see marginal results.

We have learned that survivors' continuing participation in our support groups is the primary and only feedback. I would like to remove it altogether. Brain Injury Survivors hate taking tests.

A: The survey is optional for the person in the VSG. DSHS requires a mechanism to track the success of the program. The vendor is not penalized for participants not wanting to take the survey. The survey does need to be available for those who want to track as a feedback loop for themselves. The survey tool will also be used for family members and caregiver participating in VSG's. We will add language to show that it is optional for participants to take the assessments.

Question #36: There is no attachment F (Contractor Intake Form). However, it is in the Attachment B Sample Bid Submission Letter. Is this a required document?

A: Only the Apparent Successful Bidder completes the Contractor Intake Form.

All other terms and conditions in this Solicitation remain the same.

Attendees at the March 27, 2025 Bidder Conference included the following:

1. Stephaine Ssaaka, DSHS
2. Kim Conner, DSHS
3. Susan Engels, DSHS
4. Janet Novinger, Imaginal Network
5. Urvi Solanki, SPARC Health PLLC
6. Dr. Meg Robertson, MAR Mental Health Therapy
7. Bill Hortenstine, Kitsap Brain Injury
8. Tess Lawson, The Arc of Grays Harbor
9. Gillian Marshall, Dynamic and Innovative Research Solutions/GLM Consulting and associates
10. Mark McEnderfer, Clarvida
11. Shellie Respass, LMHC
12. Ruth Wilson, The Polytech
13. James McDonald, C.R.E.W Services and Consulting

DSHS amends RFP Solicitation 2513-870 document, Section 3 Project Scope to reflect the following:

3. Project Scope

The program should be designed to provide the Washington State funded TBI Council Virtual Support Groups (VSGs), facilitation and a platform for education, information, and infrastructure to enhance the quality and accessibility of TBI support groups statewide. Offer structured, evidence-**informed** psychoeducational sessions focused on TBI-related challenges. Build a supportive community for individuals with TBI, their caregivers, and families.

DSHS amends Attachment A- Sample Contract 2513-870, Section 2 Purpose of the Special Terms and Conditions to reflect the following:

2. Purpose.

The purpose of this Contract is to provide the Washington State funded TBI Council Virtual Support Groups (VSGs), facilitation and a platform for education, information, and infrastructure to enhance the quality and accessibility of TBI support groups statewide. Offer structured, evidence-**informed** psychoeducational sessions focused on TBI-related challenges. Build a supportive community for individuals with TBI, their caregivers, and families.

DSHS amends RFP Solicitation 2513-870 document, Project Scope (Section 3.e.2.b Educational Focus) to reflect the following:

(2) Educational Focus:

- (a) Develop quarterly plans outlining session objectives, topics, and learning outcomes. Each session plan should include measurable goals to assess participant progress and engagement.
- (b) Use evidence-**informed** approaches to structure sessions, such as cognitive-behavioral strategies, mindfulness techniques, and self-advocacy frameworks, while avoiding any actual group therapy.
- (c) Host guest presenters who are subject matter experts (e.g., neuropsychologists, rehabilitation specialists) to provide participants with diverse perspectives and specialized knowledge
- (d) Ensure session materials are accessible to all participants, including those with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.

DSHS amends Attachment A- Sample Contract 2513-870, Statement of Work (Section 3.e.2.b Educational Focus) to reflect the following:

(2) Educational Focus:

- (a) Develop quarterly plans outlining session objectives, topics, and learning outcomes. Each session plan should include measurable goals to assess participant progress and engagement.

- (b) Use evidence-**informed** approaches to structure sessions, such as cognitive-behavioral strategies, mindfulness techniques, and self-advocacy frameworks, while avoiding any actual group therapy.
- (c) Host guest presenters who are subject matter experts (e.g., neuropsychologists, rehabilitation specialists) to provide participants with diverse perspectives and specialized knowledge
- (d) Ensure session materials are accessible to all participants, including those with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.

DSHS amends RFP Solicitation 2513-870 document, Project Scope (Section 3.b.3.c Data Reporting) to reflect the following:

(3) Data Reporting:

- (a) Supply downloadable participation and engagement data to the TBI Coordinator .
- (b) Include metrics on group attendance, user feedback, and population analytics.
- (c) Implement a formal pre- and post-session self -assessment for participants to track progress in knowledge gain, coping strategies, and social support. **Each participant's completion of the self-assessment is optional.**

DSHS amends Attachment A- Sample Contract 2513-870, Statement of Work (Section 3.b.3.c Data Reporting) to reflect the following:

(3) Data Reporting:

- (a) Supply downloadable participation and engagement data to the TBI Coordinator .
- (b) Include metrics on group attendance, user feedback, and population analytics.
- (c) Implement a formal pre- and post-session self -assessment for participants to track progress in knowledge gain, coping strategies, and social support. **Each participant's completion of the self-assessment is optional.**

DSHS amends RFP Solicitation 2513-870 document, Project Scope (Section 3.c Facilitation and Staffing) to reflect the following:

c. Facilitation and Staffing

(1) Facilitator Qualifications:

- (a) A bachelor's degree in psychology, rehabilitation, social work, or a related field, OR 1 year of lived experience equating to each year of degree requirements (subject to approval).
 - i. Completion of mandatory certifications, including
 - (A) **DSHS Mental Health Level 1 Course** or
 - (B) Mental Health First Aid
 - ii. Review DSHS-Sponsored Community Support Group Facilitator Training.
- (b) Successful completion of background checks prior to facilitation.

DSHS amends Attachment A- Sample Contract 2513-870, Statement of Work (Section 3.c Facilitation and Staffing) to reflect the following:

c. Facilitation and Staffing

(1) Facilitator Qualifications:

- (a) A bachelor's degree in psychology, rehabilitation, social work, or a related field, OR 1 year of lived experience equating to each year of degree requirements (subject to approval).
 - i. Completion of mandatory certifications, including
 - (A) **DSHS Mental Health Level 1 Course** or
 - (B) Mental Health First Aid
 - ii. Review DSHS-Sponsored Community Support Group Facilitator Training.
- (b) Successful completion of background checks prior to facilitation.



Welcome to the Bidder Conference

ALTSA/HCS Request for Proposal #2513-870
Traumatic Brain Injury Virtual Support Groups

March 17, 2025
11:00 to 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time

Agenda

- Introductions and Ground Rules
- Opening Remarks
- Project Scope and RFP Goals
- Important Reminders & Key Dates
- Q&A

Introductions and Ground Rules

- DSHS Introductions
- Presentation, followed by Q&A
 - Please hold questions until end
 - Questions must be sent to the RFP Coordinator via Chat
- List of attendees may become a public record
- Focus on general issues related to RFP instructions, requirements, etc.
- Verbal responses to questions are unofficial
- Official responses to be posted as an RFP amendment

Procurement Goals

- Fair, open and competitive procurement process
- DSHS is a public entity and subject to state procurement rules and regulations
- This competitive Solicitation is issued to assist the ALTSA Administration, HCS Division of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in seeking qualified Contractor (s) to provide the Washington State TBI Council funded TBI Virtual Support Groups (VSGs), facilitation and a platform for education, information, and infrastructure to enhance the quality and accessibility of TBI support groups statewide. Offer structured, evidence-based psychoeducational sessions focused on TBI-related challenges. Build a supportive community for individuals with TBI, their caregivers, and families

Background

- Per RCW 74.31.50 the Department Social and Health services (DSHS) will provide funding from the traumatic brain injury account to programs that facilitate support groups to individuals with traumatic brain injuries and their families and;
- DSHS shall use a request for proposal process to select the programs to receive funding. The Council shall provide recommendations to the department on the criteria to be used in selecting the programs.
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Virtual Support Groups (VSG) have been operating since August 2020.
- The model we are utilizing now is that there is one contract for both the platform and the facilitation of the VSG's.

Project Scope

The program should be designed to provide:

- TBI Council Virtual Support Groups (VSGs), facilitation and a platform for education, information
- Infrastructure to enhance the quality and accessibility of TBI support groups statewide
- Offer structured, evidence-based psychoeducational sessions focused on TBI-related challenges
- Build a supportive community for individuals with TBI, their caregivers, and families.

Bidders' Proposals

- Based on the terms, conditions and deliverables set forth in the RFP and Attachment A: Sample Contract
- Provide clear, concise, direct, detailed and specific responses
- Ensure responses are accurate, without assumptions
- Apparent Successful Bidder's Proposal may become part of the Contract

*Submitting a Proposal that does not follow
the RFP requirements will be deemed non-responsive*

Submission Requirements

Attachment B: Sample Submission Letter

Attachment C: Certifications & Assurances

Attachment D: Bidder Response Form

1. Bidder Information (Administrative Response)
2. Bidder EO 18-03 Certification
3. Bidder Certification – Washington Small Business
4. Bidder Certification – Veteran Owned Business
5. Bidder Qualifications and Experience (Management Response)
6. Bidders Solution to RFP (Technical Response)
7. Bidders Proposed Pricing (Cost Response)

Attachment E: Contractor Inclusion Plan



Important Reminders

- As Amendments are posted to WEBS, these should be carefully reviewed and downloaded by the Bidders
- DSHS is committed to ensuring a fair and open competitive process
- To ensure that all Bidders receive a fair and open opportunity, it is vital that all interested parties abide by the requirements
- **All questions and information regarding this RFP should be directed to the RFP Coordinator** and to no one else, unless otherwise directed in writing by the RFP Coordinator



Bidders may submit written questions or requests for change in Solicitation Requirements until 3:00 p.m. Pacific Time	March 21, 2025
DSHS intends to post responses to written questions	March 27, 2025
Bidders must submit Proposals by 3:00 p.m. Pacific Time	April 14, 2025
Oral Evaluations	May 19-May 23, 2025
Announcement of Apparent Successful Bidder on WEBS	May 27, 2025
Contract Execution/Start Date	July 1, 2025

Q&A

- Questions must be sent to the RFP Coordinator directly via Chat
- **Verbal responses to questions are unofficial**
- Official responses shall be posted on WEBS as an RFP Amendment
- If there are questions that we do not get to today, please submit these via email to the RFP Coordinator at: **stephaine.ssaaka@dshs.wa.gov**

Final Questions are due via email no later than March 21, 2025 by 3:00PM PT



DSHS appreciates your
time and interest in this
solicitation!