



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

DATE: October 15, 2025

TO: RFP #2535-878 Bidders

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

SUBJECT: Amendment No. 01 – Answers to Bidder Conference Questions,
Questions received after the Bidder Conference, Updates to RFP
Period of Contract Performance, Update to Attachment A- Sample
Contract Special Terms and Conditions

DSHS amends the RFP #2535-878 to provide guidance and answers to the questions received at the Bidder Conference, questions received by the Solicitation Coordinator as of 3 p.m. on October 9, 2025 to provide the presentation that was given during the Bidder Conference, to update the RFP Period of Performance, and to update Attachment A- Sample Contract Special Terms and Conditions.

Bidder's Questions and Answers
RFP# 2535-878

Question #1: What is the associated spending and anticipated head count that you need?

A: For the 2025–2027 biennium, WA Cares has allocated a total of \$4.2 million to support the Community Assistance Network. Individual Lead CBOs may be awarded up to \$350,000, depending on factors such as service area size, population reach, and alignment with statewide equity priorities.

With the Lead CBOs, whichever service area you are servicing, we ask that you have at least 2 Community Assistors providing assistance to customers in your service area.

Question #2: How is the state handling subcontracting? How many layers are acceptable?

A: Lead CBOs may subcontract with their network partners within their service area (s). However, they remain fully responsible for oversight, performance, and compliance. Multiple layers of subcontracting are discouraged to reduce complexity, administrative overhead, and risk; subcontracting should be limited to one level where possible.

Question #3: Can AAA be lead organizations?

A: No. WA Cares has contracts with the AAA Area Agencies on Aging Contractors who also deliver application support. This means that any AAA with a contract for WA Cares application assistance should avoid taking on the role of CAN Lead CBOs. This is because both the AAAs and CAN contracts include provisions that allow them to offer application assistance. If an organization were to operate in both capacities, it could lead to service duplication and the potential for double billing for identical activities.

Question #4: You mention lead CBOs, just confirming this is open to for-profit CBOs, correct?

A: Yes. The RFP is open to both nonprofit and for-profit Lead CBOs, provided they meet the eligibility requirements and demonstrate capacity to fulfill the contract.

Question #5: What are the WA Cares benefits?

A: <https://wacaresfund.wa.gov/>

Question #6: Would we be able to have community assistors work remotely in the community or do they need to provide dedicated space for these positions?

A: We request that there is a dedicated space available where customers can receive in-person assistance, as the Community Assistors will also require the ability to verify information.

Question #7: Is the 350,000 per year or length of contract?

A: For the 2025–2027 biennium, WA Cares has allocated a total of \$4.2 million to support the Community Assistance Network. Individual Lead CBOs may be awarded up to \$350,000, depending on factors such as service area size, population reach, and alignment with statewide equity priorities.

Contract Term:

Contracts will begin with an initial two-year period to establish operations, build capacity, and implement services. WA Cares will have the option to extend contracts for up to three additional years, resulting in a potential total term of five years.

Question #8: Do you anticipate that the community assistors will need to follow up with customers to ensure they go through, and they have what they need or is it just for the questions and submitting application?

A: The goal is to complete applications in a single sitting to reduce back-and-forth visits. However, there may be instances where the contribution determination is not returned in a timely manner, as this process can extend up to 14 business days. In these cases, the Community Assistor may be required to conduct a follow-up. The goal is to have the Community Assistor assist customers to complete the application and avoid any case management work.

Once the application is submitted, the next steps in the eligibility process for benefits will be handled by DSHS.

Question #9: Do the community assistors need to be employees of the CBOs?

A: It is up to the CBOs to determine whether Community Assistors are employees or subcontracted, as long as they meet contract requirements.

Question #10: Is there additional funding for the community assistors?

A: No. For the 2025–2027 biennium, WA Cares has allocated a total of \$4.2 million to support the Community Assistance Network.

Question #11: The RFP references serving multiple service areas and we're looking to avoid creating overlap between service areas between CBOs. Is there a region or service area map available for us to reference as we put together our proposal?

A: WA Cares does not have a formal service area map available. Lead CBOs should define their proposed service area (s) based on their organizational reach, partnerships, and community presence. Proposals should clearly describe the geographic boundaries and populations to be served. During evaluation, WA Cares will consider coverage and potential overlap to ensure equitable statewide access and avoid duplication between Lead CBOs.

Question #12: Are CA's able to meet clients in the community in person but remotely working outside of a dedicated office space or a combination of both?

A: Community Assistors are expected to provide in-person support to customers in an established and accessible location within their service area (s). A dedicated office space is required to ensure privacy, reliability, and accessibility for customers seeking assistance. Community Assistors may also engage with customers at outreach events or other community setting as appropriate; however, the RFP does not currently include virtual/remote provisions.

Question #13: This RFP is for CBO? The CBO's are responsible for assisting application completion? Will they be paying claims?

A: Correct — Lead CBOs are responsible for program education and application assistance. They will not pay or process claims; benefits are administered by the state through DSHS/WA Cares Fund.

Question #14: If the \$350,000 is for all five years it seems that DSHS does not expect this funding to fully cover the cost of Community Assistors. Then it is assumed that awardees will leverage other funding streams to cover the staffing and other associated costs. Correct?

A: For the 2025–2027 biennium, WA Cares has allocated a total of \$4.2 million to support the Community Assistance Network. This funding will be distributed among selected contractors, with the goal of partnering with around 12 Lead Community-Based Organizations across the state. Individual awards may be up to \$350,000, depending on factors such as service area size, population reach, and alignment with statewide equity priorities

Question #15: If an area receives no bids, how will DSHS cover that area?

A: If there is service area with no Lead CBOs established, WA Cares will work with the nearest Lead CBO with capacity to extend coverage.

Question #16: You are looking for multiple CBOs to be lead in their region for \$70k per year for 5 years?

A: For the 2025–2027 biennium, WA Cares has allocated a total of \$4.2 million to support the Community Assistance Network. This funding will be distributed among selected contractors, with the goal of partnering with around 12 Lead Community-Based Organizations across the state. Individual awards may be up to \$350,000, depending on factors such as service area size, population reach, and alignment with statewide equity priorities.

Contract Term:

Contracts will begin with an initial two-year period to establish operations, build capacity, and implement services. WA Cares will have the option to extend contracts for up to three additional years, resulting in a potential total term of five years.

Question #17: Is a data or application platform that WA Cares already uses or will be required for lead CBOs to utilize? What is the vision for applications from all these regions to get consolidated and pushed up for claims to be processed? Does WA Cares have a platform identified?

A: WA Cares has in place the Community Assistor Portal that will be used by all lead CBOs and Community Assistors. The system is designed to securely collect and transmit application information for processing. Lead CBOs and Assistors will receive training and access credentials to utilize the Community Assistor Portal as part of the program onboarding.

Question #18: If an area is initially unserved and later added to a Lead's territory, will funding be adjusted mid-year to reflect the expansion?

A: If an unserved area is subsequently added to a Lead CBO's service territory, funding adjustments may be considered in accordance with program capacity, contractual terms, and the availability of funds. Any modification to the contract require prior written approval from DSHS and an executed amendment to reflect the change in scope or funding.

Question #19: Can you clarify about the \$4.2 million set aside for the Community Assistor Network? My understanding based on the RFP is this pot of money will cover the contracts for up to 9 CBOs x up to \$350,000 for contract = \$3.15M. How is the other \$1.05M being allocated?

A: 12 total contracts will be awarded. 9 standard awards and 3 reserved awards.

Question #20: Can CBOs apply for multiple regions where they have presence or are you looking for only one region/contract per CBO?

A: CBOs may propose for multiple regions where they have presence. Award decisions will depend on demonstrated capacity to serve and fulfill contract requirements.

Question #21: Is DSHS looking for a contractor to build a statewide network of CBOs \$350,000 over 5 years, or 5,833 per month for 5 years. Will separate funding be provided to the CBOs who agree to provide direct client assistance.

A: For the 2025–2027 biennium, WA Cares has allocated a total of \$4.2 million to support the Community Assistance Network. This funding will be distributed among selected contractors, with the goal of partnering with around 12 Lead Community-Based Organizations across the state.

Individual awards may be up to \$350,000, depending on factors such as service area size, population reach, and alignment with statewide equity priorities.

Contract Term:

Contracts will begin with an initial two-year period to establish operations, build capacity, and implement services. WA Cares will have the option to extend contracts for up to three additional years, resulting in a potential total term of five years.

This structure provides stability while allowing flexibility to adjust funding and performance expectations as the network grows and evolves.

Question #22: Will you confirm that holding a Washington State Business License is the only licensing prerequisite for the Lead CBO (no additional professional licensure for Assistors)?

A: A Washington State Business License is required. No additional professional licensure for Assistors is required.

Register with the Department of Revenue and get a business license if you meet any of the following conditions:

- Your business requires city, county, and state endorsements.
- You are doing business using a name other than your full name legal name.
- You plan to hire employees within the next 90 days.
- You sell a product or provide a service that requires the collection of sales tax.
- Your gross income is \$12,000 per year or more.
- Your business is required to pay taxes or fees to the Department of Revenue.

- You are a buyer or processor of specialty wood products.
 - Your business meets Nexus threshold reporting requirements.
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Question #23: For subcontracting, what dollar thresholds or scopes require prior written approval, and will DSHS provide model sub recipient terms to ensure data-security flow-downs?

A: Any subcontract that covers a major part of the work, key program activities, or a large share of the budget will need written approval from DSHS before execution. DSHS will also share model language and terms that help ensure data security and compliance flow down to all subcontractors. The Lead CBO will still be responsible for making sure those partners meet all the same standards and requirements as stated in the DSHS contract. This is really to make sure the program stays consistent statewide — that data is secure, services are reliable, and all partners operate under the same accountability framework

Question #24: Will lead CBOs be responsible for developing and providing the required training for the Community Assistors, or will DSHS/WCF provide this training and cover associated costs?

A: WA Cares will provide training for Community Assistors

Question #25: Could a group of CBOs apply to cover multiple regions and get more than \$350,000? So if three came together to apply as one for three regions, could they apply and receive \$1,050,000?

A: That depends on your proposal and how you will be able to fulfil the contract.

Question #26: Does the 4.2 million also include paying for services for customers?

A: It includes application assistance and program education. (Refer to the simple contract).

Question #27: As an organization with public radio in Spanish, could we apply for the "education" aspect for the yearly amount?

A: No, we need to have both application assistance and program education provided as a Lead CBO and meet the eligibility requirements.

Question #28: Is there an expected or desired service level for the Community Assistors, such as the number of applications to be completed per month, number of education sessions to be provided in the community, etc?

A: While CAN has not set a specific target for the number of applications completed, Lead CBOs are expected to demonstrate active engagement and measurable results within their service areas. Each CBO will complete and submit monthly activity reports—covering application assistance sessions and community program education efforts—using the provided templates. Please refer to Attachment A: Sample Contract for expectations around performance, reporting, and service delivery standards.

Question #29: Are costs for interpretation/translation (spoken, ASL, document translation) allowable as direct program costs, and are there preferred state contracts we should leverage?

A: We strongly value partnerships with Lead Community-Based Organizations that reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of their service areas. Ideally, Lead CBOs will have staff or subcontractors who are fluent in the languages spoken by the communities they serve, which can help minimize the need for third-party interpretation. However, if translation or interpretation is necessary, those expenses are permissible within the contract budget at the discretion of the Lead CBO.

Question #30: Will DSHS supply brand guidelines, pre-approved educational materials, and translation resources, or should the Lead develop and submit for approval before use?

A: WA Cares will provide a wide selection of educational materials, both in English and translated into our top 15 languages. Lead CBOs can request any additional materials needed to support their education and outreach activities.

Question #31: Will Letters of Support be considered during the evaluation process? In other words, is it desirable for an organization applying for lead CBO to show they have support from other entities in their service area to do this work?

A: You can attach them, but they will not be scored.

Question #32: CBO contracts with sub-contractors to provide Community Assistors, is that all included in the up to 350,000?

A: Yes

Question #33: The Sample Contract describes Assistor background checks and disqualifying offenses. Can you confirm acceptable vendors, turnaround expectations, and whether provisional onboarding pending results are permitted under supervision?

A: Background checks must be completed through state-approved vendors. Results must be current within 24 months. Provisional onboarding is not permitted; Assistors must clear background checks prior to working/interacting with customers.

Question #34: Have these services been contracted in the past or are they currently contracted to providers? If yes, who are the providers that are contracted now or in the past?

A: WA Cares has contracts with the Area Agencies on Aging Contractors who also deliver application support and outreach efforts.

Question #35: Question 1a of Attachment D, Bidder Response Form) states, "Indicate whether you employ or Contract with current or former state employees." Are former employees of public schools and universities, including teachers and admin staff, considered former state employees in this context?

A: No, former employees of public schools and universities, including teachers and admin staff are not considered former state employees in this context.

Attendees at the October 1, 2025 Bidder Conference included the following:

1. Stephaine Ssaaka, DSHS
2. Pakou Lee, DSHS
3. Tammy Layton, DSHS
4. Stephanie Endler, DSHS
5. Leilani Mutu, DSHS
6. Emily Blue, North Sound ACH
7. Robin Haynes, SIMBA
8. Rob Hays, Service Alternatives
9. Kathy Burgoyne, Uncommon Solutions
10. Meghan Gosting, Citrine Health
11. Evangeline Krupalni, 360 Talent Solutions MSP
12. Dr. Gillian Marshall, Dynamic and Innovative Research Solutions
13. Becky Jones, Citrine Health
14. Lisa Wayne, 360 Talent Solutions, a Pacer Company
15. Kim Brinkmann, WeVitalize Consulting
16. April Matsui, PIM Savvy
17. Peach E, NCG Associates LLC
18. Druscilla Namagembe, Harmony Lane Adult Family Home LLC
19. Kerri Mallams, Citrine Health
20. Lynn French, Global Business Development LLC
21. Rudina San Agustin, TRAC Associates
22. Travis Gannon, ODAT Services
23. Dr. Esperanza Lemons, NCEC/KDNA, Director of Education, Granger WA
24. Eva Dunn, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
25. Nicola Gilbert, NCG Healthcare
26. Sarah Lunstrum, Take the Next Step

DSHS amends Attachment A Sample Contract 2535-878, Section 2, Special Terms and Conditions to reflect the following

18. Period of Contract Performance.

The period of performance under the Contract shall be **2/1/2026 through 1/31/2028**. The term of the Contract may be extended by amendment up to **three times** for up to one year per amendment at the sole discretion of DSHS. Additional services that are appropriate to the scope of this Solicitation, as determined by DSHS, may be added to the Contract in a mutually agreeable amendment

DSHS amends RFP Solicitation 2535-878 document, Section 4 Period of Contract Performance to reflect the following:

4. Period of Contract Performance

DSHS intends to award multiple Contract(s) for the Services described in this Competitive Solicitation. The period of performance under the Contract shall be **February 1, 2026- January 31, 2028**. The term of the Contract may be extended by amendment up to **3 times** for up to 1 year per amendment at the sole discretion of DSHS. Additional services that are appropriate to the scope of this Solicitation, as determined by DSHS, may be added to the Contract in a mutually agreeable amendment



Welcome to the Bidder Conference

ALTSA/WACares Request for Proposal #2535-878

WA Cares Community Assistance Network

October 1, 2025
10:00 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 Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, WA Cares Division of the Home and Community Living Administration (HCLA) in seeking qualified Contractor (s) to: establish a strong network of trusted partners who will act as Lead Community-Based Organizations in supporting Washingtonians statewide. By engaging organizations with deep community connections, the WA Cares Community Assistance network will advance equitable access to WA Cares benefits for Washingtonians, build public awareness, and strengthen the overall effectiveness of the WA Cares Fund.
- The WA Cares Community Assistance Network will contract with Lead Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) who will create and oversee a network of trained Community Assistors, either within their own organization or through their contracted network partners across their service areas, ensuring widespread access to services and support. Community Assistors provide guidance and support to individuals navigating the application process for the WA Cares Fund. This will enable the Community Assistance Network to reach a broader audience and provide Washingtonians with the necessary information and support to successfully navigate and apply for WA Cares benefits.

Background

- WA Cares Fund
- WA Cares Community Assistance Network (CAN)



Project Scope

- Core Objectives
- CAN Structure
- Contractor Responsibilities
- Community Assistor Role
- Quality Assurance Framework
- Scope Boundaries
- Outcomes & Impact



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 in writing



Bidders may submit written questions or requests for change in Solicitation Requirements until 3 p.m. Pacific Time	October 9, 2025
DSHS intends to post responses to written questions	October 16, 2025
Bidders must submit Proposals by 3 p.m. Pacific Time	November 19, 2025
Oral Evaluations	January 5, 2026- January 8, 2026
Announcement of Apparent Successful Bidder on WEBS	January 9, 2026
Contract Execution/Start Date	February 1, 2026

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, October 9, 2025 by 3PM PT



DSHS appreciates your
time and interest in this
solicitation!