



Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services Veterans Service Grant Proposal Instructions

Questions concerning this solicitation must be received by the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services at vets.info@vets.ri.gov no later than **June 10, 2023, 12:00 p.m.** Questions should be submitted in a *Microsoft Word* attachment. Please reference the RFP **#072023** on all correspondence. Questions received, if any, will be posted on the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services (vets.ri.gov) website as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to download this information.

The **Posting Date** for this RFP will be **June 1, 2023**. **Final Deadline for Proposals** for this RFP is **June 30, 2023, 12:00 p.m.** No applications will be accepted after this time.

Note to Applicants:

- This RFP and application process has changed significantly from previous iterations, please thoroughly review this document.
- Previous and new applicants must update/register on-line at the State of Rhode Island's Division of Purchasing new web-hosted eProcurement system, Ocean State Procures: <https://ridop.ri.gov/ocean-state-procures-osp/osp-vendor-registration>. Awards will not be granted if the registration is not approved by the Department of Administration.

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services (RIVETS) is soliciting proposals from qualified vendors to provide programs or services for unmet needs of the Veteran and military family community pursuant to the terms of this Request for Proposals (“RFP”) and the State’s General Conditions of Purchase, found at <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/220-30-00-13>

SECTION 2: INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS

1. Applicants are advised to review all sections of this RFP carefully and to follow instructions completely. Failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein will result in a zero score or rejection of the proposal.
2. Applicants must use the provided format for their application. No other format will be accepted.
3. Applications must be delivered digitally by sending to: vets.info@vets.ri.gov; physical copies will not be accepted.
4. If awarded, applicants must comply with Department of Administration guidelines pertaining to use of the Grants Management System to qualify for and receive payment.

Recipients will receive further guidance if their application is selected, and funds are awarded.

5. Applicants selected to receive grant funding are required to become a provider-partner in Unite RI, the state's coordinated care network for Veterans and their families. No action is needed during the initial application, this procedure will be explained during the award letter process. Failure to do so will forfeit any award made.
6. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, or for providing oral or written clarification of its content, shall be borne by the vendor. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs even if the RFP is cancelled or continued.
7. Proposals are irrevocable for a period of not less than 180 days following the opening date and may not be withdrawn except with the express written permission of the State Purchasing Agent.
8. All pricing submitted will be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated in the proposal.
9. An award pursuant to this RFP will be made to a prime vendor, or prime vendors in the various categories, who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Subcontracts are permitted, provided their use is clearly indicated in the vendor's proposal and the subcontractor(s) to be used identified in the proposal.
10. **The purchase of goods and/or services under an award made pursuant to this RFP will be contingent on the availability of appropriated funds by the General Assembly. Awarding of funds is contingent upon allocations in the SFY2024 state budget. If available, funds cannot and will not be issued until after the passage and effective date of the SFY2024 state budget.**
11. Vendors are advised that all materials submitted to RIVETS for consideration in response to this RFP may be public records as defined in R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-2-1, *et seq.*, and may be released for inspection upon request once an award has been made.

Any information submitted in response to this RFP that a vendor believes are trade secrets or commercial or financial information of a privileged or confidential nature should be clearly marked as such. The vendor should provide a brief explanation as to why each portion of information marked should be withheld from public disclosure. Vendors are advised that RIVETS and/or the Division of Purchases may release records marked confidential by a vendor upon a public records request if the State determines the marked information does not fall within the category of trade secrets or commercial or financial information of a privileged or confidential nature.

12. Interested parties are instructed to visit the RIVETS and Division of Purchasing websites on a regular basis for additional information relating to this solicitation that may be released as an addendum to this RFP.
13. In accordance with R.I. Gen. Laws § 7-1.2-1401, no foreign corporation has the right to transact business in Rhode Island until it has procured a certificate of authority from the Secretary of State. This is a requirement only for successful vendor(s). For further information, contact the Secretary of State at 222-3040.
14. Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), a “business associate” is a person or entity, other than a member of the workforce of a HIPAA-covered entity, who performs functions or activities on behalf of, or provides certain services to, a HIPAA-covered entity that involves access by the business associate to HIPAA protected health information. A “business associate” also is a subcontractor that creates, receives, maintains, or transmits HIPAA protected health information on behalf of another business associate. The HIPAA rules generally require that HIPAA-covered entities and business associates enter into contracts with their business associates to ensure that the business associates will appropriately safeguard HIPAA protected health information. Therefore, if a Contractor qualifies as a business associate, it will be required to sign a HIPAA business associate agreement.

SECTION 3. SCOPE OF WORK AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. You must request funding under one of the following 14 categories:
 - **Veterans Living in Poverty.** Includes basic needs, food security, housing, goods and services, emergency financial services, and substance abuse and support programs. The Veteran poverty growth rate is less than that of non-Veterans; however, the overall Veteran poverty rate is rising. The poverty rate for Veterans between the ages of 18 to 34 is higher than all other age groups. Disabled Veterans have higher poverty rates than disabled non-Veterans for all age groups except those over age 65. Programs should focus on reversing these poverty trends.
 - **Veterans Experiencing Homelessness.** Includes basic needs, goods and services, emergency financial services, rental assistance, home ownership, homeless services, and transitional and permanent housing. There are over 400 chronically homeless Veterans in Rhode Island and a significant number who are at-risk of homelessness. Programs should focus on solutions to address needs not met through existing programs.
 - **Veterans Employment and Employment Training.** Includes job training, job search and preparation services, and business ownership counseling. Programs should focus on preparing Veterans and transitioning service members for meaningful

careers, providing entrepreneurship resources and expertise, and protecting re-employment rights.

- **Veterans Education.** Includes GI Bill assistance, financial aid counseling, loans, scholarships, tuition programs, learning skills preparation, and student Veterans organization support. Programs should focus on promoting educational opportunities and supporting student Veterans currently enrolled in schools.
- **Veterans Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)/Agent Orange Effects/Burn Pits.** Includes healthcare services, mental health counseling, and recreational and spiritual programs. Programs should focus on promoting wellness and improving outcomes for Veterans facing unique, military-related health challenges caused by PTSD, Agent Orange, and burn pits.
- **Veterans Disability Benefits.** Includes the federal VA entities, Veteran Service Organizations, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations serving individuals with disabilities. Programs should focus on assisting Veterans navigate the benefit application process or improving quality of life.
- **Veterans Long-Term Care.** Includes VA programs and services, caregiver support, palliative care, and nursing home care. Programs should focus on enhancing shared decision making, advance care planning, and related long-term services and supports.
- **Veterans Transportation.** Includes transportation to and from the Providence VA Medical Center locations, other health-related facilities, the VA Regional Office, and places serving basic life needs. Programs should focus on increasing transportation options such as through special public transportation fares for Veterans, joint dispatching, service contracts, feeder services, ride-share, driver training drivers, or other innovative modes of transport.
- **Veterans Family Members/Caregivers.** Includes counseling and support, family readiness groups, education and information services, wellness programs, crisis programs, peer monitoring programs, and substance abuse and support programs. Family Members and caregivers provide crucial support in maintaining households and caring for aging Veterans and Veterans living with disabilities. Programs should focus on supporting and assisting those who undertake this important role.
- **Veterans Financial Planning/Services.** Includes compensation, consumer protection, budgetary, pension and tax counseling, unemployment services, and emergency assistance. Programs should focus on preparing transitioning military members for financial success and helping all Veterans obtain financial security.

- **Veterans Legal Services.** Includes legal assistance, pro bono programs, legal clinics, judicial system programs, service records, identification cards, and military awards and discharge review. Programs should focus on access to legal resources to assist with medical challenges, disability benefits, reemployment rights, debt collection, housing, criminal matters, license restoration, and family law.
 - **Veterans Mortuary Affairs.** Includes RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery and other forms of bereavement and memorial assistance. Programs should focus on assisting Veterans plan for end-of-life and supporting families as they cope with the process of death and dying.
 - **Veterans Transitional Assistance.** Includes housing, jobs, basic needs, disability assistance, and retirement. Programs should be designed to provide comprehensive services to our service members as they transition from the military to civilian life after their service.
 - **Other.** Any social services, programs, or other resources provided to Veterans, family members, and/or caregivers not covered in the other 13 categories.
2. Applicants must be a government agency, non-profit organization, Veteran service organization, a program for the benefit of its Veterans, families, or survivors, or a non-Veteran-related agency that wishes to expand its programming to Veterans.
 3. Applicants that do not have a program or does not seek to develop a program that meets the requirements described above are not eligible to apply for this grant.
 4. Applicants are **required to define performance metrics and their targets**. In addition to any self-selected performance measures, RIVETS requires an estimate on how many Veterans, Service Members, and military-connected Families your program will serve.
 5. Applicants must agree to meet with Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services leadership to review performance measures **and** assign a delegate to participate in these meetings. RIVETS reserves the right to call meetings as needed.
 6. Applicants must be based in Rhode Island or have a significant presence in Rhode Island and agree to use any and all awarded funds solely for the benefit of Rhode Island residents.
 7. If awarded funding, applicants **must** produce a Mid-Year Status Report by **November 15, 2023**, detailing how their program impacted Veterans and/or their families and a Final Report by **June 30, 2024**. Applicants awarded funding must provide up-to-date performance metrics within each report, as well as describe a positive impact your program has made during this active funding period. This form must be in the format of a digital document and emailed to vets.info@vets.ri.gov This Final Report should

highlight specific examples of successful implementation of the grant funding but **must omit any personally identifiable information**. It should address the number of Veterans Served so far, as well as share details of how the program has operated thus far. Applicants agree to allow RIVETS use of this content for publication in its annual report or other collateral. **Failure to provide this document by the deadline will disqualify you from future funding opportunities.**

8. No grants will be awarded for the purchase, lease, or rent of office space, buildings, or land.

SECTION 4. PROPOSAL

1. The 14 funding categories listed on this RFP are the only categories under which programs can be funded. If two or more categories apply, please choose the primary focus.
2. Review the Project Narrative and use it as a guide and checklist for the documents and format required for the application. All information listed in the Project Narrative is required for the application to be considered. If the applicant does not have or cannot produce the documentation requested, an explanation must be provided.
3. Awards expire at the end of the state fiscal year. For this FY 2024 grant period, monies must be spent by June 30, 2024.
4. Applicants awarded funds agree to allow RIVETS to conduct site visit inspections during regular business hours and understand the visits may be unannounced.

SECTION 5: EVALUATION AND SELECTION

1. Proposals shall be reviewed by a technical evaluation committee (“TEC”) comprised of staff from State agencies.
3. RIVETS reserves the right to select the vendor(s) that it deems most qualified to provide the goods and/or services as specified herein; and, conversely, reserves the right to cancel the solicitation in its entirety in its sole discretion.
4. Proposals shall be reviewed and scored based upon the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points
Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Offeror	20 Points

Staff Qualifications	10 Points
Work Plan & Budget	40 Points
Performance Metrics (Self-defined & Number of Veterans/Service Members/Military-Connected)	20 Points
Project Scalability	10 Points
Total Possible Evaluation Points	100 Points

A general explanation of the criteria is provided:

- a. Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Offeror **(20)** – Please provide a detailed description of your organization’s background and experience delivering programs of this nature. The required financial statements will also be evaluated when determining your organization’s capacity.
 - b. Staff Qualifications **(10)** – Provide staff resumes/CVs and describe qualifications and experience of key staff who will be involved in delivering the services.
 - c. Work Plan & Budget **(40)** – Please describe in detail the framework within which services will be performed and specify within a budget how this grant money would be utilized.
 - d. Performance Metrics **(20)** – Provide an estimated number of Veterans, Service Members, and military-connected family members your program will impact and explain how you will track this number. In addition, applicants should define additional performance measures specific to their programs and explain their tracking process as appropriate. Applicants must prepare a plan to produce an impact statement, due at the time specified in the RFP.
 - e. Project Scalability **(10)** – Due to the highly competitive nature of this opportunity, your organization may be awarded a partial amount of your total request. Please describe the ability and method for your project to scale with differing funding amounts (for example, a project with a \$10,000 funding request may be able to deliver 50% of initially quoted results if only \$5,000 is awarded.) Inability to scale will score a 0 in this category.
5. Applicants may be required to submit additional written information or be asked to make an oral presentation before the TEC to clarify statements made in the proposal.

SECTION 6. QUESTIONS

1. Questions concerning this solicitation must be e-mailed to vets.info@vets.ri.gov no later than **June 10, 2023, 12:00 p.m.** No other contact with State parties is permitted.
2. Please reference RFP #072023 on all correspondence.
3. Questions should be submitted digitally or in writing in a Microsoft Word document in a narrative format with no tables.
4. Answers to questions received, if any, shall be posted on the RIVETS website as an addendum to this solicitation. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to monitor the RIVETS and Division of Purchasing websites for any procurement related postings such as addenda.

SECTION 7. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

1. Proposals shall follow the exact template listed in the addendum titled "RFP 072023 Application Template"
2. Formatting of documents.
 - a. The project narrative must be submitted in digital format.
 - b. The budget and narrative shall be typed using the formatting described above.

SECTION 8. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

1. Interested vendors must submit proposals to provide the goods and/or services covered by this RFP on or before the date and time listed on the cover page of this solicitation. Responses received after this date and time, as registered by the official time clock in the reception area of the RI Office of Veterans Services shall not be accepted.
2. Proposals must be emailed to vets.info@vets.ri.gov.
3. Proposals received after the above-referenced due date and time shall not be accepted. Proposals misdirected to other State locations or those not presented to RIVETS by the scheduled due date and time shall be determined to be late and will not be accepted. Proposals faxed to RIVETS shall not be accepted. Proposals mailed or hand-delivered shall not be accepted.

SECTION 9. CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

1. Notwithstanding the above, RIVETS reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, and to award in the State's best interest.
2. Proposals found to be technically or substantially non-responsive at any point in the evaluation process will be rejected and not considered further.
3. If an applicant is selected for an award, no work is to commence until a purchase order is issued by the Division of Purchases.
4. The State's General Conditions of Purchase contain the specific contract terms, stipulations, and affirmations to be utilized for the contract awarded for this RFP. The State's General Conditions of Purchases can be found at <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/220-30-00-13> and General Conditions - Addendum A found at <https://www.ridop.ri.gov/documents/general-conditions-addendum-a.pdf>