

This is a combined synopsis/solicitation for commercial items prepared in accordance with the format in Subpart 12.6, and 13.106, as supplemented with additional information included in this notice. This announcement constitutes the only solicitation; proposals are being requested and a written solicitation will not be issued; the provisions and clauses incorporated herein are those in effect through Federal Acquisition Circular 2005-23, effective June 12, 2008. The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center/Employee Education Resource Center, St. Louis, MO proposes to enter into a firm fixed price, competitive commercial contract. This solicitation is unrestricted and The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is 621420 and the small business size standard is \$15 million.

Responses are due Wednesday April 3, 2015 by 1pm CST. E-mail to Wanakee.Strickland@va.gov.

NOTE: Certification training must be with a not-for-profit per PL 110-387, sec 405, p. 23.

**Performance Work Statement
Peer Support Certification Training
Mental Health/ Employee Education System (EES)**

- 1. PURPOSE.** The purpose of this contract is to provide training and certification for non-certified peer support apprentices and peer support technicians. VHA's Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services Section in the Mental Health Services (MHS) have been charged with developing and approving peer support certification training services. The Director of Peer Support Services for the Mental Health Services is responsible for the program of peer support in VA's mental health programs.
- 2. BACKGROUND.** Peer support services were formally initiated in VHA mental health programs in 2006 with funding that enhanced mental health programs with recovery-oriented services, and a Director of Peer Support Services in MHS was hired in 2007. Prior to the passage of Public Law 110-387 in October 2008, peers hired in VHA were not required to be certified to provide peer services. The passage of this law as well as Public Law 111-163 (passed in May 2010) not only required that peer support specialists in VHA be certified by an appropriate peer certification program but also provided authorization for VHA to develop a national contract with a not-for-profit agency to provide training for Veterans to provide peer support services. Peer support services are an essential component of transforming VHA's mental health programs to the recovery model and are required by VHA Handbook 1160.01, *Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics*.

3. **Objectives.** The contractor shall provide VA employed peer support apprentices or technicians with training and certification. The training must result in employees being fully prepared to take and pass a certification examination administered by the award vendor. This training must cover the competencies and skills for peer support services in mental health programs as defined by MHS and described in the Specific Tasks and Deliverables Section below.
4. **Scope.** The Contractor shall provide the required labor and materials to develop and present a peer support specialist training and certification program for VA employees nationwide. Classes will be up to 20 students per class and for up to a total of 7 classes per year. Contractors shall follow the existing quality control plan that contains, at a minimum, a review of all services, a description of the methods used for evaluating the learning experiences, and a description of the records to be kept to document evaluations and any corrective/preventive actions taken in advance of the award of the contract.

Services: Peer support certification training, including didactic, experiential, and multimedia modalities, covering the 35 competencies that VHA has designated as required for peer support staff are identified in the Specific Tasks and Deliverables section below. Some competencies marked with an asterisk in the list of mandatory tasks must have an experiential component that includes role playing and provides for demonstration of those skills in order to establish competencies.

Training for the competencies that do not require the face-to-face experiential modality may be provided through in-person training or through completion of workbook materials, manuals, or online learning conducted prior to the experiential training.

An examination that demonstrates mastery of the peer support competencies and skills must be administered by the contractor in two segments. A performance based segment that demonstrates mastery of the competencies and skills learned in the face-to-face training (those marked below with an asterisk under “Task One”) will be administered during the face-to-face training. A second segment of the examination will be administered to measure the competencies and skills that do not require a face-to-face experiential modality after completion of the training or at a later time agreed upon and acceptable to VHA for administration at the student participant’s home facility. Peer support staff must pass the examination with a score determined by and agreeable to the vendor and MHS.

5. **Specific Tasks and Deliverables.** If for any reason, any deliverable cannot be delivered on time according to the below schedule, the contractor shall provide a written explanation three days prior to the due date to the Contracting Officer Representative (COR). This written transmittal shall include a firm commitment of when the work shall be completed. This transmittal to the COR shall cite reasons for the delay, and the impact on the overall project. The COR will review collaboratively with the program office and facts and issue a response in accordance with the contract terms and conditions. Unless otherwise specified an electronic copy shall be placed in the designated SharePoint site or other designated site. Specifically, the contractor shall:

5.1 Task One. The contractor shall develop a plan for training to thoroughly cover the following 35 competencies. Competencies that must have an experiential performance based modality of training that includes role-playing or other demonstration of skills, observed and critiqued

by the trainer, are marked with an asterisk in the list below. The contractor may include other topics/competencies in the training which they deem appropriate or are required by their state's peer support certification training approval process.

Recovery Principles

- Overview of Psychosocial Rehabilitation
- Components of Recovery
- Stages of Recovery
- Peer Support Role in Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Peer Support Principles

- *Being a role model
- *Instilling hope
- *Being an Advocate
- Principal Duties of Peer Support Staff

Cultural Competence

- *Understanding how roles of ethnicity, race, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, local community and other sub-cultures may influence recovery.

Communications Skills

- *Effective Listening & Asking Questions Skills
- *Communication styles (passive/aggressive/assertive), and Verbal and Nonverbal communication
- *Conflict resolution skills

Group Facilitation Skills

- *Basic Understanding of Group Dynamics and interactions
- How to Use Support Groups

Addressing Stigma

- *Managing Internalized Stigma
- *Managing Environmental Stigma

Understanding Different Illnesses

- Major Psychiatric Conditions in DSM IV
- Addictive Disorders
- Co-Occurring Disorders
- Medications and side effects

*Trauma informed care: understanding impact of prior trauma on individuals 'coping and resilience skills.

Recovery Tools

- *Using Recovery workbooks and other self-help instruments
- *Problem solving, using solution focused strategies
- *Telling your personal recovery story, being mindful of whom you're addressing

Self-help Groups

Teaching how to manage self-talk and combating negative self-talk

Professional Development & Workplace Skills

- *Ethics
- *Boundary Issues and Dual Relationships
- *Working effectively with professionals on an interdisciplinary team

Managing Crisis and Emergency Situations

Early Warning Signs of Illness' Symptoms Worsening

- *Crisis Prevention, Using Resources Early
 - *Crisis Interventions
 - *Understanding Suicide Prevention
 - *Challenging situations with veterans who are under the influence of substances, angry, in psychosis or non-verbal state.
- Personal Safety Issues

Deliverable 5.1.1. Provide a written training plan that describes how each competency will be taught (didactic, multi-media presentation, role playing or other experiential form of learning), identifying which of the contractor's teaching materials will be used with reference to page/section and the time spent on each competency.

Deliverable 5.1.2: Provide all teaching materials that will be used in the training plan for review, including training manuals, power point presentations, and audio-visual resources. Electronic versions of any of these materials may be sent via e-mail.

5.2 Task Two. The Contractor shall develop an examination that demonstrates mastery of the peer support competencies and skills that will be administered in two segments. A performance based segment that demonstrates mastery of the competencies and skills learned in the face-to-face training (those marked above with an asterisk under "Task One") will be administered during the face-to-face training. A second segment of the examination will be administered to measure the competencies and skills that do not require a face-to-face experiential modality after completion of the training or at a later time agreed upon and acceptable to VHA for administration at the student participant's home facility. Peer support staff must pass the examination with a score determined by and agreeable to the vendor and MHS. The competency that each test item covers is clearly identified on the provided test document or an accompanying document.

Deliverable 5.2.1. Copy of proposed test if one is already in use or a plan to develop such a test, which identifies the competencies each test item measures.

Deliverable 5.2.2. Copy of validity and reliability report of proposed/existing test.

5.3 Task Three The Contractor shall present training curricula developed above to classes of peer support technicians or peer specialists at times agreed upon by both organizations. The class ratios of students to instructors will be 10:1.

Deliverable 5.3.1: Schedule of training classes offered, as needed at St. Louis VA Medical Center training room.

5.4 Task Four: The Contractor shall administer and grade performance based competency assessments during the face-to-face training and a second segment of the examination will be administered to measure the competencies and skills that do not require a face-to-face experiential modality after completion of the training or at a later time agreed upon and acceptable to VHA for administration at the student participant's home facility. Peer support staff must pass the examination with a score determined by and agreeable to the vendor and MHS.

Deliverable 5.4.1: Plan of certification testing schedule

Deliverable 5.4.2: A written template of letter to inform participants of testing results

Deliverable 5.4.3: A written plan for participants who have not passed the exam on the first attempt.

5.5 Task Five: The Contractor shall provide a response to VA staff inquiries about VA peer specialist certification training within one working day of the inquiry.

Deliverable 5.5.1: Two templates: One for verbal response for telephone inquiries and an e-mail template for written response to an e-mail inquiry.

Deliverable 5.5.2: Telephone/e-mail call and response logs

5.6 Task Six: The Contractor shall provide VA staff who request an application a written application form that contains information necessary to register them for the next training. All forms will be attachable to e-mail messages so that there is maximum flexibility for registering for classes. Application forms will be approved by MHS and EES to approve for privacy issues.

Deliverable 5.6.1: A template of the application form.

5.7 Task Seven: The Contractor shall provide VA staff with a template for a letter of acceptance with specific details of for trainings, VA/EES staff will distribute to attendees.

Deliverable 5.7.1: A written template of acceptance letter with information for participant.

5.8 Task Eight. The contractor shall develop an individualized training report for each participant describing participant's attendance, punctuality, level of participation, attitude towards learning, acquisition of competencies/skills, score on final competency test, evaluation survey completed by the student expressing satisfaction with the training and recommendations for continued learning to the participant with a copy to the Director of Peer Support Services in MHS.

Deliverable 5.8.1. Proposed Template for the Individualized Written Training Report.

Deliverable 5.8.2. Proposed satisfaction survey template to be completed by each student who takes the training. To be reviewed and approved by EES evaluation team.

Deliverable 5.8.3. Individualized Written Training Report for Each Participant at the Completion of Training

5.9 Task Nine. The contractor shall develop an aggregated annual report summarizing

- data of number of student participation by facility
- total number of students
- percentage passing certification test
- content validity and reliability measure, reporting any test item that is answered incorrectly greater than 60 percent of the time by students taking the test the first administration of the test in 2nd quarter
- a plan to rewrite or a substitute replacement question for any test item failing to attain the validity and reliability measure, to be approved by the VHA Director of Peer Support Services
- percentage completing/dropping out of training
- reasons for discontinuance
- percentage of students reporting full satisfaction with the certification training

Deliverable 5.9.1. Template for Proposed Annual Report Template

Deliverable 5.9.2. Template of Report of Content validity and reliability measure for test items.

Deliverable 5.9.3 Template of Plan to rewrite or substitute replacement questions for test items which do not meet content validity and reliability measure.

Deliverable 5.9.4. Annual Report

Deliverable 5.9.5 Evaluation instruments provided by VHA will be administered and completed by the contractor during training.

5.10 Schedule for Mandatory Deliverables.

5.10.1 Table of Base Period Mandatory Deliverables Due Dates

REFERENCE	DELIVERABLE	DUE DATE
5.1.1	Written Training Plan	Before contract award
5.1.2	Copies of any training materials used to train for every competency.	Before contract award
5.2.1	Copy of Written/Performance Based Exam Identifying which Competencies Each Test Item Covers	Before contract award
5.2.2	Copy of Validity and Reliability Report of Proposed/Existing Test	Before contract award
5.3.1	Schedule of Training	Before contract award
5.4.1	Certification Testing Schedule	Before contract award
5.5.1	2 Response Templates for Training Inquiries- one written and one telephone	Before contract award
5.5.2	Call and e-mail response log Copies of E-mail inquiries and responses to VA Staff	As requested
5.6.1	A Template of Application Form	Before contract award
5.7.1	A Written Acceptance Letter Template	Before contract award
5.7.2	Acceptance letter to applicants	Within 10 working days from date of receipt of

		application
5.8.1	Individualized Written Training Report Template	Before contract award
5.8.2	Proposed Satisfaction Survey Template	Before contract award
5.8.3	Individualized Written Training Report	Within one work week following individual's completion of training.
5.9.1	Annual Report Template	Before contract award
5.9.2	Template of Content validity and reliability measure for test items.	Before contract award
5.9.3	Template of plan to rewrite or substitute replacement questions for test items which do not meet content validity and reliability measure.	Before contract award
5.9.4	Annual Report	November 1. To cover Oct. 1 previous year-Sept. 30 of current year (Federal Fiscal Year)
5.9.5	VHA learning evaluation instruments will be administered by the contractor	During training sessions.

- 6. Period of Performance.** The period of performance shall be from date of award for a period of 12 months or until all 7 classes completed with two optional years. Training dates should avoid the following Federal holidays:

There is ten (10) Federal holidays set by law (U.S.C. Title 5 Section 6103):

Under current definitions, four are set by date:

New Year's Day	January 1
Independence Day	July 4
Veteran's Day	November 11

Christmas Day

December 25

If any of the above falls on a Saturday, then Friday shall be observed as a holiday. Similarly, if one falls on a Sunday, then Monday shall be observed as a holiday.

The other six are set by a day of the week and month:

Martin Luther King Day	Third Monday in January
Washington's Birthday	Third Monday in February
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Thanksgiving	Fourth Thursday in November

- 7. Place of Performance.** The Contractor shall prepare for the training location in St. Louis, Missouri at the Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Center training room.
- 8. Key Personnel.** Certain skilled experience professional and/or technical personnel are essential for accomplishing the work to be performed. These individuals are defined as "Key personnel" and are those persons whose resumes were submitted and marked by the vendor as "Key Personnel". "Substitutions shall only be accepted if in compliance with "Substitution of Key Personnel" provision identified below.

Name

Title

Certified Peer Specialist Trainer
Training Program Manager/Supervisor

The Contracting Officer may notify the Contractor and request immediate removal of any personnel assigned to the task order by the Contractor that are deemed to have a conflict of interest with the government or if the performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory. The reason for removal will be documented and replacement personnel shall be identified within three business days of the notification. Employment and staffing difficulties shall not be justification for failure to meet established schedules.

- 8.1 Substitution of Key Personnel.** All Contractor requests for approval of substitutions hereunder shall be submitted in writing to the COR and the Contracting Officer at least thirty (30) calendar days in advance of the effective date, whenever possible, and shall provide a detailed explanation of the circumstances necessitating the proposed substitution, a complete resume for the proposed substitute, and any other information requested by the Contracting Officer necessary to approve or disapprove the proposed substitution. New personnel

shall not commence work until all necessary security requirements, as defined in Section J, have been fulfilled and resumes provided and accepted. The COR and the Contracting Officer will evaluate such requests and promptly notify the Contractor of approval or disapproval in writing.

- 8.2** The Contractor shall be responsible for managing and overseeing the activities of all Contractor personnel, as well as subcontractor efforts used in performance of this effort. The Contractor's management responsibilities shall include all activities necessary to ensure the Accomplishment of timely and effective support, performed in accordance with the Requirements contained in the statement of work.
- 8.3** Domain Knowledge. Contractors will be expected to present proof of their knowledge of peer specialist certification training. The peer specialist trainers should have a minimum of 3 years' experience as a practicing peer specialist and 2 years' experience in teaching peer specialist certification training courses. The Peer Specialist Training Program Manager should have a minimum of 3 years' experience as a peer specialist trainer and two years' experience as a peer specialist training program manager. Domain knowledge criteria are specified below:

Recovery Principles

Overview of Psychosocial Rehabilitation
Components of Recovery
Stages of Recovery
Peer Support Role in PSR

Peer Support Principles

Being a role model
Instilling hope
Being an Advocate
Principal Duties of Peer Support Staff

Cultural Competence

Understanding how roles of ethnicity, race, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation, local community and other sub-cultures may influence recovery.

Communications Skills

Effective Listening & Asking Questions Skills
Communication styles (pass/agg/assert.), and Verbal and Nonverbal communication
Conflict resolution skills

Group Facilitation Skills

Basic Understanding of Group Dynamics and interactions
How to Use Support Groups

Addressing Stigma

Managing Internalized Stigma
Managing Environmental Stigma

Understanding Different Illnesses

Major Psychiatric Conditions in DSM IV
Addictive Disorders
Co-Occurring Disorders
Medications and side effects
*Trauma informed care: understanding impact of prior trauma on individuals' coping and resilience skills.

Recovery Tools

Using recovery workbooks and other self-help instruments
Problem solving, using solution focused strategies
Telling your personal recovery story, being mindful of who you're addressing
Self-help Groups
Teaching how to manage self-talk and combating negative self-talk

Professional Development & Workplace Skills

Ethics
Boundary Issues and Dual Relationships

Managing Crisis and Emergency Situations

Working effectively with professionals on an interdisciplinary team

Early Warning Signs of Illness' Symptoms Worsening
Crisis Prevention, Using Resources Early
Crisis Interventions
Understanding Suicide Prevention

Challenging situations with veterans who are under the influence of substances, angry, in psychosis or non-verbal state.
Personal Safety Issues

Contractor Personnel Requirements. Personnel proposed shall have an in depth knowledge of:

- Knowledge of all the domains listed above;
- Specific knowledge of Military and Veteran Cultures;
- Expert knowledge of Peer Support Specialist Skills and Competencies;
- Expert knowledge of Supervision and Management of Peer Support Certification Trainers.

9. Training Coordination Meeting. The Contracting officer may hold a face to face post award meeting for the contractor and trainers to attend with MHS Peer Support staff and Employee Education Staff. This will occur soon after contract is awarded to discuss details and answer questions. This contracting offer may valve this requirement or hold the meeting virtually.

10. Type of Contract. A firm fixed price contract is anticipated for this requirement.

11. Changes to the PWS. Any changes to this PWS shall be authorized and approved only through written correspondence from the Contracting Officer. A copy of each change will be kept in a project folder along with all other products of the project. Costs incurred by the contractor through the actions of parties other than the Contracting Officer shall be borne by the contractor.

12. Government and Contractor Responsibilities.

- a. The PM will provide the contractor with copies of documents that the VA is required to provide.

- b. The contractor shall request other VA documentation deemed pertinent to the work accomplishment directly from the COR. The contractor is expected to use common knowledge and resourcefulness in securing all other reference materials, standard industry publications, and related materials that are pertinent to the work.

The contractor shall maintain frequent communications with the Program Office and the COR to conduct work in progress reviews. Progress reports shall be delivered electronically to the COR and Program Manager, with an electronic courtesy copy to the Contracting Office.

13. Security Requirements

The C&A requirements do not apply, and a Security Accreditation Package is not required.

Table of QASP for Peer Support Certification Training Contract

Task/Deliverable	Method of Surveillance	Performance Indicator	Standard	Acceptable Quality Level
Training plan	Direct observation	Contains all required competencies	Must include all competencies outlined in the PWS	100%
Draft Training Materials	Direct Observation	Curriculum contains lessons for each competency	Must contain lessons for all competencies	90%
Final Training Materials	Direct Observation	Curriculum contains lessons for each competency; free of grammatical and	Must contain lessons for all competencies	100%

		spelling errors		
Call and E-Mail Response Logs	Direct Observation	Logs give dates, times of inquiries and when responded to, to requests for information about certification training.	Must respond to inquiries within one working day of requests.	90%
Participant Satisfaction Survey	Training is evaluated by peer technicians/specialists who take the training	Level of Satisfaction indicated by survey	No substantiated complaints found	90%
Individualized Training Reports	Direct Observation	Reports contain: participant's -attendance, -punctuality, -level of participation, -attitude towards learning, -acquisition of competencies/skills, -score on final competency test, -evaluation statement completed by the student expressing satisfaction with the training and -recommendations for continued learning	Full report must be completed for each individual taking the certification training within one week of completion of the training.	100%
Annual Aggregated Training Report	Direct Observation	Report contains -number of students participating by	Full report must be completed containing all of	100%

		<p>facility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -total number of students - percentage passing certification test -content validity and reliability measure, reporting any test item that is answered incorrectly greater than 60 percent of the time by first group of students taking the test -a plan to rewrite or a substitute replacement question for any test item failing to attain the validity and reliability measure, to be approved by the VHA Director of Peer Support Services -percentage completing/dropping out -reasons for discontinuance -percentage of students reporting full satisfaction with the certification training 	<p>the elements and received by Director of Peer Support Services with a copy to the COR no later than November 1st to cover the previous fiscal year (Oct 1, previous year to September 30th, current year)</p>	
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VHA learning evaluation instruments will be administered by the contractor	Direct Surveillance	Each training event will have a VHA instrument to be used by contractor	Each training event is evaluated	95% of attendees will complete evaluation instruments