2017 Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) employment services RFP
questions and answers

Pre-proposal meeting notes:

For this year’s RFP, there is an increased focus on self-sufficiency.
There is also more focus on education pathways and career planning.
The plan is to use the Quick Connect model in four of the regions.
Quick Connect will require 1 FTE of employment counselor, with goal of connecting families to employment services more quickly.
We are targeting contract negotiations in later August or September—just in case there is a need to address possible changes in the makeup of contracted agencies and additional time is necessary to make those changes.

Questions and answers

Q: **We are trying to understand the impact from an overall contract and caseload size standpoint for agencies that provide would Quick Connect. We understand that agencies will be providing 1FTE Employment Counselor services at the Service Center locations: for 2018 (and beyond), would those agencies also have a caseload comparable in size to those individuals who are currently identified as receiving “Hub” MFIP employment services?**
A: No. Quick Connect does not have a caseload associated with it. If the agency wants the counselor to see clients, please include in your submission.

Q: **Does the 1 FTE for Quick Connect have to be filled by only one person?**
A: If you are a Quick Connect provider, you are responsible for coverage during business hours of 8:00am to 4:30pm every day the service center is open. The Quick Connect work can be done by more than one person.

Q: **Can you propose Quick Connect at all sites?**
A: Yes.
Q: Are you able to provide some insight into the assumptions for case load under the Quick Connect model and how it might impact (be similar to or differ from) the current “HUB” model?
A: There will be no caseload responsibilities for the Quick Connect counselor. The Quick Connect counselor is intended to help new families learn about the system and fill out their choice sheets, not work with a caseload.

Q: Section 6.6 has the following requirement: To be eligible to function as an Employment Service Provider, an organization must fall into one of the following categories: A public, private, or non-profit agency certified by the Department of Employment and Economic Development; A public, private, or non-profit agency that is not certified; or A county agency that chooses to provide services. Based on that language, would a publicly-owned company be able to bid?
A: Yes.

Q: In the Budget workbook, Salary Schedule by Program Worksheet, Hennepin County is requesting we provide all proposed salaries, all Henn Cty contract salaries, and all “other programs” salaries. For the “all other programs” is Henn Cty looking for us to provide a summary of all staff salaries in the entire organization?
A: Yes.

Q: In the Budget workbook, Budget Substantiation Worksheet, Hennepin County is requesting our budget by line item, description of the line item, and method of calculation (i.e. 2 laptops at $125 per month). We can complete this for our proposed program with ease. However, it appears that Hennepin County is also requesting this information for “All other HC funded contracts” “all other programs” “Admin” and “fund-raising”. For these other fields, are you expecting us to have complete line item, description, and method of calculation for the entire agency?
A: Yes.

Q: In the Budget section, Hennepin County states that they require “a description of the job titles, and qualifications of the staff completing the accounting, payroll, and financial reporting.” We can provide that – would you like us to include all of position descriptions of staff (which may be as many as 20 positions?) in the proposal?
A: Please include those that are making the accounting decision, not those that are clerical workers.
Q: Also, Hennepin County is requesting the number of FTEs devoted to MFIP related to accounting, payroll and financial reporting functions. We generally use an allocation system for these departments; may we instead of providing FTE related to this proposed project, provide an explanation of our allocation system for these departments?
A: Yes.

Q: How is Quick Connect different than Hub Services?
A: Quick Connect is a component of current Hub. There is no expectation for a consortium model to provide Quick Connect services in this RFP. Hub services refer clients to three agencies within a consortium, whereas for Quick Connect, providers will refer to all ESPs.

Q: With the Hub model, the grantee has some oversight with the subcontractors, will that continue?
A: The consortium model is no longer a requirement. Consortums can be proposed, but they are not required.

Q: What are some of the expectations regarding Quick Connect counselors and the other providers?
A: The Quick Connect counselor will need to have a basic understanding of the services provided at all ESPs; with the increased focus on self-sufficiency, the Quick Connect counselor will funnel clients to agencies best fit to work with the clients’ needs.

Q: Will there be multiple Quick Connect counselors at a single site?
A: No. There will be one contract for Quick Connect per location.

Q: Will the Quick Connect counselor have some marketing responsibilities? Will they have to highlight the strengths of another program?
A: The Quick Connect counselor will be educated on the other services that are available at all ESPs and will direct the client to the agency that best meets their needs.

Q: Will caseload staff be co-located at the Quick Connect site?
A: No.

Q: Would there be space to co-locate other staff with the Quick Connect counselor?
A: No. Only space for the Quick Connect counselor.
Q: What is the funding impact of Quick Connect staff compared to the Hub system?
A: Please submit the costs associated with a Quick Connect counselor as part of your proposal. The Hub Model is vastly different from the Quick Connect model. Cost comparison is not ideal or possible.

Q: What happened to the traditional model?
A: All employment services will be delivered using the traditional model.

Q: If the Quick Connect counselor is out, is there a maximum number of people that can cover that role?
A: There is no limit that is set on the number of people who can provide coverage.

Q: Does the service provider need to furnish its own Internet?
A: No.

Q: So providers don’t need to budget for Quick Connect space costs?
A: No. Quick Connect providers will have space at the service centers at no cost to the provider.

Q: Should agencies submit a number of clients or slots?
A: Please make your projections on the minimum number of clients to be served. We no longer work with slots.

Q: Will a Quick Connect referral go directly to the agency chosen by the client?
A: Yes.

Q: Will the Quick Connect counselor take over some of the referral that has been done by the County?
A: No. The County will still be the only source of referral to the agency chosen by the client.

Q: Do we have to apply to be a Quick Connect provider?
A: No.
Q: County makes a referral to a vendor that they choose, so how does the Quick Connect counselor fit in?
A: When the client applies for MFIP, they meet with the Quick Connect counselor who explains the employment services process and the options available to the client at different ESPs. In addition the Quick Connect counselor will assist the client in completing the choice sheet and answer any general questions regarding employment services.

Q: If we propose a Quick Connect counselor, are we proposing to serve a certain number of clients via Quick Connect? And if we want to provide Quick Connect at multiple sites, should be split those numbers or combine them?
A: No. The Quick Connect counselor will meet with any client the HSR sends to them, they do not carry a caseload. The respondents are responsible for determining how they want to submit their budgets.

Q: Can an agency be only a Quick Connect provider?
A: Yes

Q: With the “all other programs” column of the budget worksheet: How much detail do you want with the substantiation?
A: Please keep the Hennepin County programs in one distinct area and then everything else can be rolled into an “all other” column.

Q: Who is considered key staff?
A: The key decision-makers for MFIP employment services are Directors, Program Managers, Supervisors or anyone that will make decisions that direct the delivery of service.

Q: How does the County intend to measure the self-support index?
A: The State measures the Self-support index quarterly. As with the WPR, the county will distribute the Self-Support index by agency.

Q: Do any hub providers have priority as Quick Connect providers?
A: No.

Q: Do you need to have a service site in the region where you provide services?
A: No.
**Q:** If our agency does fee-for-service work for the County, should we list that work in the “all other HC-funded contracts”?
**A:** No. Fee-for-service revenues and costs can be listed in the “all other services” column.

**Q:** What is the county’s policy for support services for closed MFIP cases?
**A:** There are no support services for closed MFIP cases using MFIP funding. However, providers can use other sources of funding to provide support services if they choose.

**Q:** Will the county be changing its level of support for those cases that are closed?
**A:** There are no support services for closed MFIP cases using MFIP funding.

**Q:** Will you include information about the current performance (WPR, etc) of the current provider agencies? It would be helpful to see the current benchmarks that are established by the existing providers.
**A:** No. Specific numbers for current vendors will not be posted as part of this RFP.

**Q:** Can you still specify a target population?
**A:** If you want to serve a specific population, you can include this in your proposal.

**Q:** Is the Quick Connect counselor responsible for specific target populations?
**A:** No. The Quick Connect counselor will meet with all clients referred to them in the service center.

**Q:** Can a Quick Connect counselor make a referral to an agency that has a specific target population if they don’t seem to fit that target?
**A:** We do not have agencies serving a specific population at this time. The Quick Connect counselor will help the client complete the choice sheet selecting agencies that are the best fit for that client.

**Q:** According to language in the RFP, will ESPs be serving MFIP and FSS families?
**A:** The RFP is to serve both MFIP and FSS families.

**Q:** Is there a specific number of providers that will get contracts?
**A:** No.
Q: Is your vision to have as many providers as possible?
A: No.

Q: Is there a per client cost estimate?
A: Projected clients served divided by total fund would yield the best possible estimate.

Q: Do you know when the non-designated sites will be determined?
A: There is no timeline at this time.

Q: If roughly 13,000 is your caseload and roughly 60% are accessing services. Could you provide some detail on this number?
A: We expect to serve 13,000 clients in 2018. And at any given time, approximately 60% will be receiving MFIP employment services.

Q: Is there a preference for a single provider or a group?
A: We do not have preference for a group or single provider.

Q: If an agency is applying to be a Quick Connect Provider, can they have extra narrative pages or attach a separate description for that part of the work? I know the RFP as written does not allow for that, but it seems like a significant task – it would be helpful to have additional space to explain our plan.
A: The narrative section is limited to 10 pages. Proposals including Quick Connect may be up to 12 pages.

Q: In the budget substantiation workbook, what is the budget period to be proposed in this RFP? 1/1/18-12/31/18?
A: Yes. Please send a budget for 2018 only.

Q: Also, in the budget substantiation workbook, should we have two separate columns for Proposed HC Program – one budget for Traditional MFIP and a separate column for the budget to provide Quick Connect, should we choose to include Quick Connect in our proposal?
A: You will need to include a budget for each program if you choose to submit a proposal for both Quick Connect and MFIP Employment Services.

Q: In the past, we were under the impression that Admin expenses could not go past 10% of the total budget. Currently, our admin expense costs more. Are we able to ask for over 10% in Admin costs, such as 13%?
A: Per DHS Bulletin 15-32-01 Admin expenses are capped at 7.5%
Q: Also, are Client Support dollars required to be 10% of the budget? Is this a requirement or are we able to reduce this amount to 9% and still remain competitive in the RFP process?
A: No. 10% is the required, minimum amount for Client Support Dollars.

Q: (Section 2.1 p.3) The RFP indicates a start date of January 1, 2018. Is this the start date for when a selected vendor begins providing services, or the start date for when a vendor can begin transition from a previous vendor [if applicable].
A: Selected vendors will begin providing Employment Services on 1/1/2018.

Q: Will the County consider a contract start date at least 60 days prior to the date a selected vendor will begin providing services? This transition time would allow a newly selected vendor sufficient time to adequately complete needed implementation activities to guarantee a smooth transition.
A: No. New providers should be adding the transition process and start up costs into their proposals. Providers will be notified ahead of time if they’ve been selected for the January 1, 2018 start date.

Q: (Section 6.4.A.6 p.14) Does the Workforce One system allow uploads of imaged documents for verification? Or must documentation be maintained in paper files?
A: Hennepin County’s ECF (Electronic Case File) will allow uploads of verification documents. WorkForce One is launching EDS (Electronic Document Storage) with the ability to upload documents such as job logs.

Q: (Section 6.4.A p.14) What reporting functionality exists in Workforce One? For example, can an ES provider pull a report that shows WPR for their caseload, or generate a list of participants who have achieved employment within a specific time period?
A: WPR is a DEED provided function. But providers can generate a variety of reports that are specific to their organization (IE clients served, employed clients, educational and age limits, etc.)

Q: (Section 6.4.A p.14) Do current ES providers use proprietary case management systems or work exclusively in the Workforce One system?
A: ES providers are expected to be working in WF-1. WorkForce One is the state system where all client data is required to be entered. Some employment service providers create other systems or spread sheets to help them manage data.
Q: (Section 6.4.A  p.14) Does the Workforce One system provide for case management and client tracking?
A: Yes.

Q: (Section 6.3  p.10) Is co-location available in any of the human services offices? If so, which ones?
A: No. There only be space for one Quick Connect counselor.

Q: (Section 6.4.K  p.16) Should contractors include funds for transportation costs, training and other support services in their budgets?
A: Yes.

Q: (Section 7.1  p.18) Can requested documents (i.e. standardized curriculum, organizational chart) identified in this section be included as attachments to the proposal narrative?
A: Curriculum would be considered part of the narrative section. Organizational charts can be attachments.

Q: (Section 7.10  p.21) This section asks vendors to state hourly rates for staff. We don’t see a place for that in the budget workbook provided. Should the hourly rates be provided in a separate document?
A: Yes.

Q: Will selected vendors be awarded a minimum number of individuals to serve?
A: Contracts will be negotiated individually. Providers will be awarded a set dollar amount and associated with that funding amount will be a minimum number of clients to be served.

Q: Will a specific amount of referrals be guaranteed as a part of the contract?
A: No.

Q: (Section 6.5  p.16) Can you provide the monthly performance of current vendors for the past 6 months? This allows a bidder to more accurately understand the level of current performance and areas for improvement?
A: No.

Q: (Section 6.4  p.14) Please provide current caseload size by region.
A: Hennepin county residents can access services at any human service center and can choose any ESP. Caseload distribution is not based on region.
Q: (Section 6.3 p.10) Can you provide a copy of the CHOICE sheet that clients complete at the Quick Connect locations?
A: Choice sheets will be created after contracts are awarded.

Q: (Section 6.3 p.10) Should the bidder budget for furniture, internet, phone, computers etc. when bidding a Quick Connect location?
A: At Quick Connect sites we provide furniture and internet. Anything else should be included in your budget.

Q: (Section 6.3 p.10) Can you describe the referral process as it relates to the hand off between quick connect staff, county workers and the providers?
A: Applicants coming in to our service centers applying for MFIP (or with general questions regarding employment services) will be sent to see a Quick Connect provider by the HSR taking the application. Quick connect staff will work with the applicant to select an employment service provider.

Q: Please provide the names and titles of the county staff who were present at the Bidders conference.

Q: (Section 7.1 p.18) We interpret the county’s requirement that “Proposal narratives are to be no more than 10 pages in length” to mean that the bidder’s response to all required scope of work elements (section 7.3 to 7.9) for all proposed service regions or quick connect sites is limited to 10 pages in its entirety. Can you confirm this assumption is accurate? Can you also confirm that the 10 limit is exclusive of any attachments necessary to further illustrate a bidder’s capacity or service design?
A: You are correct. The narrative portion or your proposal is limited to 10 pages and is intended to offer space to explain the required scope of work elements. An additional 2 pages are allowed for those applying to be a Quick Connect provider. The work plan with time line; staffing pattern; budget workbook; Letter of Commitment; optional letters of support; financial capacity information; program fact sheet; and RFP checklist documents are all attachments and are not considered part of the narrative. No other documents are sought.

Q: (Section 7.10 p.20) Can you confirm the items requested in Section 7.10 are excluded from the page limitation described on page 18, Section 7.1?
A: That is correct. None of the documents are subject to the narrative’s 10-page limit. The work plan with time line; staffing pattern; budget workbook; Letter of Commitment; optional letters of support; financial capacity information; program fact sheet; and RFP checklist documents are all attachments and are not considered part of the narrative.
Q: With Pipeline Services (6.4, part c) is Hennepin County looking for services exclusively and uniquely for employed participants, or are you open to a broader pipeline model for services that meet the needs of both employed & unemployed participants to increase earnings, access training, and improve outcomes?
A: Both employed and unemployed participants will be served.

Q: For the retention outcomes in 6.5, what method of data collection does Hennepin County intend to use? Is this something that will be done by individual counselors and reported by agencies or through more automated process, such as Wage Detail or PWIR?
A: Retention outcomes will need to be kept on an individual basis by contracted providers.

Q: Follow-up retention questions: (1) For clients who are unable to be located, are they considered positive, negative, or removed from the denominator? (2) Does the retention measure apply to all individual job starts or exits to employment? (3) As follow-ups are currently structured in the WF1 system, we are only able to track data on MFIP clients who have exited as UEs? If you include clients who have secured a job (with a resulting employment activity in WF1), do you have a method in place for how retention data should be captured?
A: Those who cannot be confirmed would be removed from the denominator. The retention data is measured for all employment starts. No, we do not have a set procedure for capturing retention data.

Q: Are any or all of the documents in section 7.10 included in the 10 page limit?
A: None of the documents are subject to the narrative’s 10-page limit. The work plan with time line; staffing pattern; budget workbook; Letter of Commitment; optional letters of support; financial capacity information; program fact sheet; and RFP checklist documents are all attachments and are not considered part of the narrative.

Q: During the bidders’ conference there was an indication that baseline outcome data for program goals (6.1, part b-Outcomes) could be found on the DHS report website. We note that the data on the DHS report page provides a variety of reports that in some cases presents similar data differently. Report on racial disparities contained data only on WPR and 3 year self-support index (which is different than wording in this RFP). Does Hennepin County have specific DHS reports in mind for establishing an overall performance baseline for these outcomes?
A: Hennepin County uses a number of reports including WPR and Self-Support Index reports.
Q: How many work-required participants are in each region?
A: This is a fluid number as Hennepin County clients can be served at any human service center.

Q: (Section 6.1) What does the county define as a livable wage and how did they arrive at this level?
A: The County has not defined this. A livable wage depends on family size and several other family dynamics. The County encourages providers to utilize DEEDs labor market tools.

Q: (Section 6.3) Is it expected that the Quick Connect Sites for North, Central and Northeast will be established by the end of 2017? The document states “at a later date”, however is this later in 2017 or 2018?
A: We cannot provide at date at this time.

Q: (Section 6.3) Each Quick Connect Site will have 1FTE Employment Counselor – can there be more than one EC per site? What training will be provided to EC’s to ensure a fair and transparent process of referrals to ESP agencies that are awarded to provide the MFIP and FSS Employment Services?
A: There cannot be more than one FTE per site. Training will be provided. Specific training is yet to be determined.

Q: (Section 6.3) Would Quick Connect Sites need to be covered during staff lunch hours, holidays and paid time off?
A: Yes.

Q: (Section 6.3) How will the QC referrals work for those areas not covered by a QC site?
A: The client completes a choice sheet with the HSR.

Q: (Section 6.3) How are the extended hours covered by the Quick Connect provider for those sites that have extended hours?
A: Quick Connect providers are required to be at their site from 8:00am to 4:30pm on all days the human service center is open.

Q: (Section 7.1) If an organization decides to apply to be a provider of Quick Connect Services, what is the page limitation?
A: Twelve of narrative will be allowed for those applying to be a Quick Connect Provider.
Q: (Section 7.10) How many work plans are required to be submitted if applying to provide Quick Connect Services? Is it acceptable to submit a second work plan for those services if we wish to?
A: Yes.

Q: (Section 7.10) Key staff identified in proposal are defined as whom? As three professional references is required for each person, we want to only pursue this where essential. For example are executive staff positions (ED, president, CFO etc.) that are not directly named in the budget included in this requirement?
A: Key staff are people who are closely associated with providing the services.

Q: (Budget) Is there a separate budget required if applying to be a QC site? Even if it is not required, is it acceptable to submit a second budget for those services if we wish to?
A: Yes.

Q: (Budget) Is depreciation (for buildings) allowable under the MFIP contract?
A: Depreciation can be an allocation for assets that were not purchased with contracted dollars.

Q: (Budget) Please confirm under the new contract if we can go over up to 10% on a direct program or client support line items?
A: No, there is no over allocations without prior county approval. Budgets may be changed during the contract year. But prior county approval is needed before making adjustments.

Q: (Budget) What is the basis of the calculation for the admin rate? Will the admin rate change?
A: The Admin rate is set by DHS at 7.5%. Currently, no change is anticipated.

Q: (Miscellaneous) In the event of changes in current contract and providers, what happens to current caseload?
A: Caseloads will be moved in accordance with the funding levels and clients to be served expectations in contracts.

Q: (Miscellaneous) How does the county intend to measure the Self Support Index? Is this something that agencies will be expected to do themselves?
A: Hennepin County receives Self-Support Index quarterly from the State. The County will provide each agency with their individual performance.
Q: (Miscellaneous) What are the differences and similarities between the HUB Model and the new Quick Connect Model?
A: Quick Connect is a component of current Hub Model. There is no expectation for a consortium model to provide Quick Connect services in this RFP. Hub services refer clients to three agencies within a consortium, whereas for Quick Connect, providers will refer to all ESPs.