

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

600 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



Request for Applications (RFA)

Document Title: **SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE PROVIDER CAPACITY GRANT PROGRAM**

ISSUE DATE: April 10, 2023

RFA DOCUMENT #:

COMMBUYS Bid#: MRC RQ-23-1071-AO-CON01-456148

Please Note: This is a single document associated with a complete Bid (also referred to as Solicitation) that can be found on [COMMBUYS](http://COMMBUYS.com) (www.COMMBUYS.com). All Bidders are responsible for reviewing and adhering to all information, forms and requirements for the entire Bid, which are all incorporated into the Bid. Bidders may also contact the COMMBUYS Helpdesk at COMMBUYS@state.ma.us or the COMMBUYS Helpline at 1-888-MA-STATE. The Helpline is staffed from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday Eastern Standard or Daylight time, as applicable, except on federal, state and Suffolk county holidays.

Purchasing Department:	Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)
Address:	600 Washington Street Boston, MA 02111
Telephone #:	857-289-4140
Fax #:	617- 204-3889
Procurement Lead:	Anna Hermann, Program Manager
Email:	anna.hermann@mass.gov
Request for Response Posted:	Monday April 10, 2023 at 4:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)
Procurement Questions:	<p>Questions must be posted in COMMBUYS https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/ by: Friday, April 14, 2023, by 4:00 PM EST.</p> <p>Responses to the questions received via COMMBUYS will be posted in COMMBUYS no later than Friday, April 21, 2023, by 4:00 PM EST.</p>
Bidder's Conference:	N/A
Vendor should register and submit electronic proposals to MAANFGRANTS	https://maanfrants.my.site.com/s/loginpage {RFA notice posted in CommBuys https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/ }
RFA File Name/Title:	SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE PROVIDER CAPACITY GRANT PROGRAM
RFA File Number:	Agency Document Number: MRC RQ-23-1071-AO-CON01-456148
Procurement Management Group/Category (If Applicable):	NA
Initial Contract Period:	July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Start date may change, depending on contract execution date.
Contract Renewal Option:	Contracts may be renewed for Two (2), Five (5) year options each based on MRC's needs, availability of funding, and/or provider performance.
Type of Contract:	TBD – contingent on the selection by Program
Total Estimated Annual Award:	Up to 100,000.00 annually. Estimated Total Annual Award Amount: Up to \$1,000,000.00 for all contracts. This estimate is based on the availability of federal funding and resources. Any additional funding is based on the availability of funds.
Response Due Date and Time:	All responses are due on Friday April 28, 2023, by 4:00 PM EST in Salesforce Grant Portal https://maanfrants.my.site.com/s/loginpage
Submission method	Electronic <u>only</u> through Salesforce Grant Portal

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND, SCOPE, AND PURPOSE OF RFA

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)'s Supported Living (SL) program assists people living with severe physical disabilities in combination with a secondary disability to live as independently as possible in the community. To emphasize transitioning people with behavioral health needs back into the community, MRC is planning to launch the new Expansion Program of Supported Living services. At present, the Commonwealth faces increased demand for the existing SL program, in addition to a Direct Support Professional workforce crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated both crises and, without intervention, they will continue to grow over time.

In response, MRC is issuing the Supported Independence Provider Capacity Grant Program Request for Applications (RFA) to solicit proposals from Eligible Organizations, as defined below. The goal of the program is to ensure that eligible providers are adequately staffed, trained, and possess the IT infrastructure to engage rapidly with individuals with behavioral health concerns, so that they may successfully transition from nursing facilities back into the communities of their choice.

The target population for this RFA is individuals with behavioral health concerns who have lived in a nursing facility between 1–30 days who do not screen positive on a Level II PASRR, and who are not eligible for Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), MRC Community Living waivers or comparable benefits through any Executive Office of Health and Human Services (MRC) agencies.

The proposed program from the Applicant must be designed to meet the following activity:

1. Enhanced Trainings:

- a. Applicants must use funds to enhance trainings within their organization to ensure staff are adequately trained.

In addition, proposals may be designed to include one or both of the following activities:

2. Workforce Recruitment and Retention:

- a. Applicants may use the funds to enhance workforce recruitment and retention to ensure that their staff reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of the current or future populations they serve.

3. Technology:

- a. Applicants may use the funds to purchase hardware and/or software to support mobile care coordination and communication, support telehealth, or enhance remote supports for SL participants.
- b. Applicants may use the funds for additional IT infrastructure enhancement to empower a diverse and mobile workforce to provide agile, consumer-directed, and focused interventions in the community.

The grant program described in this RFA draws on federal funds provided to the Commonwealth under Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Qualified MRC Supported Living vendors are eligible to apply for a grant of up to \$150,000 and qualified Independent Contractors (Case Managers) are eligible to apply for a grant of up to \$20,000. MRC reserves the discretion to increase the total amount per agency. MRC anticipates awarding up to ten awards. MRC will prioritize proposals that support the

language, cultural, and technology needs of the intended population, and proposals with the potential to scale-up to serve increasing numbers of consumers.

MRC staff will review applications submitted by the deadline established herein at **Section 11** and will choose awardees and award amounts after such review, as described in **Section 10**.

Eligible Organizations receiving grant awards will be required to certify that they will not use any grant funds for uses other than those described in their grant applications.

MRC staff, or their designee, will monitor and evaluate the work of all Awardees. The grant program described in this RFA is funded from the Transitional Escrow Fund established in Section 16 of Chapter 76 of the Acts of 2021 as well as from amounts received by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the U.S. Department of the Treasury under Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), Strengthening and Investing in Home and Community Based Services for Medicaid Beneficiaries.

SECTION 2: DEFINITIONS

The following terms appearing capitalized throughout this RFA and its attachments have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

Awardee: Any Applicant that submits an application in response to this RFA, is selected for a grant award under this RFA, enters into a Contract with MRC, or its designee, and receives funding as a result of this RFA.

Applicant: An entity or individual that submits an application in response to this RFA.

Behavioral Health: refers to people living with mental health and substance use disorders, life stressors and crisis, and stress-related physical symptoms. For MRC's SL Expansion Program, further criteria are considered such as individuals being ineligible for comparable benefits (similar services through MRC sister agencies)

Behavioral Health Care: refers to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of those conditions.

Behavioral Health Integration (BHI): is the result of care teams and behavioral clinicians working together with individuals to provide person-centered supports using a systematic approach.

Diversity: Variety in people's lived experiences, perspectives, identities, languages, cultures, and values.

Community Services for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury Independent Contractors (Case Managers): Independent Contractors (Case Managers) under the Community Services for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury or Developmental Disabilities (non-DDS Eligible), RFR File Number: MRC07SHIPCMCSW.

Eligible Expenses: Expenses proposed by the Applicant to be expended in furtherance of one or more of the objectives listed in **Section 1**, and which are not determined unreasonable or impermissible by MRC. Eligible Expenses may include, without limitation, those identified in **Section 5**.

Eligible Organization: MRC's qualified providers under DDS's In-Home Supports RFR (RFR Number IHS-16) through the Supported Living Program who are in good standing; or Independent Contractors (Case Managers) under the Community Services for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury or Developmental Disabilities (non-DDS Eligible), RFR File Number: MRC07SHIPCMCSW in good standing are eligible to apply for grant funding.

Executive Office of Health and Human Services (MRC): The Massachusetts agency responsible for the administration of the MassHealth program, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 118E and Title XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act and other applicable laws and waivers.

Independent Contractor: Case Managers under the Community Services for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury or Developmental Disabilities (non-DDS Eligible), RFR File Number: MRC07SHIPCMCSW.

Independent Living Centers: Private, nonprofit, consumer-controlled organizations providing services and advocacy by and for people with all types of disabilitiesⁱ.

Metrics: Specific, measurable, and relevant measurements used to evaluate the success of a program.

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission ⁱⁱ(MRC): The Massachusetts agency responsible for helping people with disabilities live independently. MRC operates the Supported Living Program (SL), which supports people living with severe physical disabilities in combination with a secondary disability to live independently in the community.

State Fiscal Year: The twelve-month period commencing July 1 and ending June 30 and designated by the calendar year in which the fiscal year ends (e.g., State Fiscal Year 2023 ends June 30, 2023).

Supported Living Providers: MRC's qualified providers under DDS's In-Home Supports RFR (RFR Number IHS-16) through the Supported Living Program.

SECTION 3: APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

The following organizations are eligible to apply for funding:

1. MRC's qualified providers under DDS's In-Home Supports RFR (RFR Number IHS-16) through the Supported Living Program who are in good standing; or
2. Independent Contractors (Case Managers) under the Community Services for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury or Developmental Disabilities (non-DDS Eligible), RFR File Number: MRC07SHIPCMCSW who are in good standing.

SECTION 4: QUALIFYING PROGRAMS

A. Minimum Qualifications:

The proposed program from the Applicant must be designed to meet the following activity:

1. Enhanced Trainings:

- a. Applicants must use funds to enhance trainings within their organization to ensure staff are adequately trained.

In addition, proposals may be designed to include one or both of the following activities:

2. Workforce Recruitment and Retention:

- a. Applicants may use the funds to enhance workforce recruitment and retention to ensure that their staff reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of the current or future populations they serve.

3. Technology:

- a. Applicants may use the funds to purchase hardware and/or software to support mobile care coordination and communication, support telehealth, or enhance remote supports for SL participants.
- b. Applicants may use the funds for additional IT infrastructure enhancement to empower a diverse and mobile workforce to provide agile and consumer-directed and focused interventions in the community.

B. Prioritized Proposal Criteria:

MRC will prioritize proposals that support the language, cultural, and technology needs of the intended population, and proposals with the potential to scale-up to serve increasing numbers of consumers.

C. Ineligible Activities

Grant funds may not be used for any of ineligible activities. Applications proposing to use grant funds on such impermissible expenses may be rejected in whole or in part, and under no circumstances will grant funds be approved for such impermissible expenses.

Expenses that occurred before the contract start date or after the contract end date will not be reimbursed. Awardees must expend funds by no later than March 1, 2025, unless otherwise directed by MRC. MRC may extend the date by which funds may be expended, in its discretion, by providing notice to the Awardees and without requiring an amendment to the Contract.

Grant funds can be used to supplement, but not supplant, existing Medicaid HCBS or any other state-funded initiatives. These grant funds also must not overlap with any Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) waiver extension proposals.

Grant funds cannot be used to coordinate and support discharge from hospital to skilled nursing facility settings.

Additional ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Internet, hot spots, or data plans for individuals who qualify for the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program
- Room and board
- Moving costs
- Transportation costs
- Damage deposits
- Pet deposits or any other pet-related fees
- Mortgages
- Home ownership expenses including home maintenance, home repairs, utilities, and appliances
- Any other expenses not directly related to the grant initiative

SECTION 5: ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

A. Eligible Expenses

Qualifying Programs must propose to use grant funds only for Eligible Expenses. An Applicant must propose to use grant funds only for Qualifying Programs, as defined in Section 4. Eligible expenses by grant focus are include but are not limited to:

Enhanced Training

- Training/support (e.g., a part- or full-time staff person to provide education and training)
- Contracts for training and support with a third party as approved by MRC and made available to other SL providers.
- Reimbursement of billable time lost due to staff participating in training including for travel time.
- Best practice training pertaining to the regular SL domains as well as any of the of the following areas pertaining to successful work with people with behavioral health needs including but not limited to the following:
 - Motivational interviewing
 - Verbal crisis intervention
 - Stages of change model
 - Discharge planning
 - Safety planning
 - Harm reduction model
 - Opioid use disorder
 - Community-centered care for people who use drugs
 - Buprenorphine training
 - Understanding opioid-related evidence-based practices
 - Addiction treatment
 - Alcohol hallucinosis
 - Recovery coaching
 - Protections for persons with substance use disorders
 - Stimulants 101
 - Navigating newly independent living for a person with SUD
 - Assistive technology

- Remote supports
- Navigating the care spectrum, and hoarding resources
- Telehealth

Workforce Recruitment and Retention

- Staff recruitment and retention bonuses (capped at 5% of the total funds requested by the provider). Providers should calculate recruitment and retention bonuses based on staffing needs and current staffing patterns. Bonuses should not exceed the total value of \$1,000 per recipient.
- Recruiting, marketing, and outreach costs for staff that reflect the population to be served, with a focus on underserved and underrepresented populations.
- Staff referral-, sign-on-, and six-month retention bonuses with priority to the recruitment of staff that reflect the population to be served, with a focus on underserved and underrepresented populations. Bonuses should not exceed the total value of \$1,000 per recipient.
- Additional costs incurred through marketing, outreach, and onboarding efforts in order to expand the recruitment channels.
- Staff training in any of the domain areas mentioned above as pertinent to providing SL Expansion services.
- Maintaining regular SL program coverage while other staff participate in training. Any proposed and approved reasonable direct costs associated with workforce development programs.
- Technology investments in program-specific software to enhance capacity and integration of services for staff to serve as a mobile workforce and improve tasks such as case coordination and leveraging telehealth. License purchases may also be included.

IT Infrastructure Enhancement:

- One-time software licensing for enhanced communication including ASL and translation services
- Technology to support telehealth for individuals in Adult Supportive Living including laptops, devices with hotspots, cell phones, or tablets
- Technology for mobile care coordination or support of remote supports including laptops, devices with hotspots, cell phones, or tablets
- Technology investments in program-specific software to enhance capacity and integration of services. License purchases may also be included.

Grant funds may not be used for any of the ineligible activities listed in Section 4. Applications proposing to use grant funds on such impermissible expenses may be rejected in whole or in part, and under no circumstances will grant funds be approved for such impermissible expenses.

As defined in Section 2, Direct Costs are costs that are directly incurred due to the proposed programs. Programs funded with ARPA dollars are subject to the cost principles of 2 CFR 200. Subrecipients and recipients should consider:

- A. *Reasonableness*: Direct costs must be necessary and reasonable for the performance of the program. A cost is considered reasonable if it does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the similar circumstances. For goods and services, costs are considered reasonable if they are comparable to market prices for similar goods and services.
- B. *Salaries*: Administrative and clerical salaries are typically considered indirect costs. In order to claim administrative or clerical salaries as direct costs, the individual must be integral to the program or activity; the salary must be included in the budget; the subrecipient must have prior written approval; and the costs are not also recovered in indirect costs.
- C. *Allocable*: Program costs must also be allocable to the program which means a recipient or subrecipient incurred the costs in the performance of the award.

Subrecipients should maintain records of all costs incurred in the performance of the program for which they received a Federal award. If a subrecipient serves as a pass-through entity, the subrecipient is responsible for collecting and maintaining such records.

SECTION 6: GRANT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

6.1 Application Requirements

To apply for a grant award, Applicants must complete and submit the Applicant Form through MassGRANTS, an online Grant Portal established by MRC (the “Grant Portal”). Applicants can access the Grant Portal at: <https://maanfgiants.my.site.com/s/loginpage>

All information requested on the application must be supplied. If any question or request is not applicable to an Applicant’s proposal, the Applicant must indicate that it is not applicable.

Applications should be submitted by those with the delegated legal authority to apply. All applications will require a primary and secondary point of contact.

Application:

All applications must be submitted through [<https://maanfgiants.my.site.com/s/loginpage>] on or before Friday April 28, 2023, at 4:00 PM EST. MRC expects to award all the allocated funds during the first round of applications. If all funds are not allocated during the first round, the application may open again for additional applicants.

Questions must be submitted to MAHCBSGRANTS@pcgus.com

In accordance with procurement rules, answers to all questions will be posted on CommBuys <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol> on Friday April 21, 2023 by 4:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Your organization can submit its application without being registered with MMARS, but organization will need to have an *active* MMARS account to receive program funds. MMARS requires a SAM.gov ID (Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number). – EFT – w/o MMARS reg

The entity must be an active vendor in MMARS w/EFT in order to receive Program funds. This may require completing Comptroller's Office DocuSign process which must be done electronically in a timely manner.

MMARS requires a SAM.gov ID (Unique Entity ID (UEI) Number).

All information marked as required (*) on the application must be supplied.

Each application must include, at a minimum:

- Name and contact information for a primary and secondary contact at the organization applying for the grant.
- Detailed budget outlining the Direct and Indirect Costs associated with how the grant funds are to be used.
- Implementation plan.
- Any other required information as requested through the application form.

COMMBUYS will not be used for application submissions for this RFA. Any proposals or applications received through COMMBUYS or other delivery modes may be disregarded or rejected. However, all materials, including this RFA, an Applicant Form Preview (provided here as **Attachment A** for informational purposes only), and a Frequently Asked Questions document (**Attachment B**), along with any updates thereto, will be posted on COMMBUYS. In the event there are discrepancies between the materials or instructions on the Grant Portal and the COMMBUYS page for this RFA, the COMMBUYS materials will take precedence.

6.2 Evaluation of Supported Living Provider Capacity Funding

MRC will require grant Awardees to report on a set of baseline metrics for the purposes of evaluating impact of the grant funds and progress towards reaching the defined goals. The first priority for metrics and reporting is accurate data. Grantees will not be penalized or required to return funding if the data reflects that the program did not produce the expected results. MRC will work with grantees to provide support if there are concerns with feasibility in reporting on the required metrics.

Applicants are permitted to use grant funds to support the collection and analysis of program data. Applications will not be excluded if applicants are unable to meet the reporting metrics completely. The application will include space to list any metrics reporting requirements that applicants are unable to meet.

Overview of requirements:

Grantees will be required to provide baseline, interim and final reports across an established set of metrics. A sample reporting template is included in the RFA but **is not required to be submitted as part of the application.**

- *Baseline report:* Submission of the baseline report will be required within thirty days of of the award.. The baseline report will include reporting across an established set of metrics (see below) from July 1 2022 – March 31, 2023. . In addition to baseline metrics, awardees will be required to report on additional evaluation metrics as defined below. The applicant will identify these additional custom metrics in the baseline report; however, reporting will not begin on these metrics until one year after the receipt of funds.
- *Interim report:* An interim report covering the first year of the grant period will be required one year after the receipt of funds. The interim report will include comparative reporting of data from the first year of the grant period compared to the baseline metrics submitted in the initial baseline report. The interim report will also include reporting on the custom metrics as identified by the grantee.
- *Final report:* A final report will be required following the end of the grant period. The final report will include comparative reporting of data from the first and second year of the grant program compared to the baseline metrics submitted in the baseline report. The final report will also include reporting on the custom metrics as identified by the grantee for both the first and second years.

Details on required metrics:

Metrics required for all reports:

1. Total number of individuals with serious mental health and substance use served in the reporting period.
 - a. Total number of nursing home to community transitions completed during the reporting period.
 - b. Total number of long term care nursing home to community placements completed during the reporting period.
 - c. Total number of individuals able to maintain independence in the community during reporting period.
 - d. Total number of emergency room visits during the reporting period.
 - e. Total number of emergency calls during the reporting period.
2. Total cumulative staff billable hours during reporting period serving individuals with behavioral health needs.
3. Total number of trainings completed in reporting period.
4. Total number of training certificates awarded to agency staff during reporting period.

See **Attachment E** for additional reporting requirements for the interim and final report.

Grantees will also be required to participate in a facilitated focus group convened by MRC, one year after the receipt of grant funds and again at the end of the grant period. The purpose of these focus groups is to collect qualitative information on what worked, what didn't work and ways to further enhance and improve coordination and communication.

Per the Commonwealth Terms and Conditions, grant recipients are required to retain program documents and records for six years from the date of submission of the final expenditure report.

SECTION 7: GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

7.1 Grant Program Process and Authority

This RFA is issued under the provisions of regulations at 815 CMR 2.00. Various terms found in the state procurement regulations at 801 CMR 21.00 are also incorporated by reference in this RFA. Words used but not specifically defined in this RFA shall have the meanings defined in 815 CMR 2.00 or 801 CMR 21.00. Unless otherwise specified in this RFA, all communications, applications, and documentation must be in English, using English customary weights and measures (feet, pounds, quarts, etc.) and U.S. dollars. All applications must be submitted in accordance with the terms specified in **Section 9**.

Payments under this RFA, including payments under any Contract extensions, are subject to legislative appropriation and authorization, availability of state and federal funds, and MRC's determination of satisfactory performance and advancement of the public interest and the objectives of MRC.

MRC reserves the right to amend this RFA at any time prior to contract execution. Any such amendment will be posted on COMMBUYS. Potential Applicants are advised to check this site regularly, as this will be the sole guaranteed method used for notification of changes.

MRC makes no guarantee that a Contract, or any obligation to provide funding, will result from this RFA.

This RFA is distributed electronically using the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' eProcurement system known as COMMBUYS at www.commbuys.com (see **Section 12.1** for more information about COMMBUYS). However, as described in **Section 6.1**, COMMBUYS is **not** the method to be used for submission or acceptance of applications. Applicants must use the Grant Portal to submit applications.

7.2 Duration of Contract

Contracts resulting from this RFA shall be in effect upon execution and shall end on March 31, 2025, provided however, that MRC may extend an Awardee's Contract for up to four years in its discretion, in increments to be determined by MRC.

7.3 Anticipated Grant Awards

Grant funds will be awarded through a competitive application process according to this RFA. Applications will be evaluated in accordance with **Section 10**.

Currently qualified MRC Supported Living Vendors **grant request may not exceed \$100,0000**

Currently qualified Independent Contractors grant amount may not exceed \$20,000

MRC anticipates awarding funds to approximately 10 agencies and/ or independent contractors and reserves the discretion to increase the total amounts per agency.

These are federal funds provided to the Commonwealth under Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Awards under this RFA shall be for a fixed amount, which amount shall be determined and announced to the Awardee in accordance with **Section 10** and shall be paid out in a single payment to each Awardee upon execution of the Contract. If additional funds become available during the Contract period, MRC reserves the right to increase the maximum obligation to some or all of the Contracts executed as a result of this RFA or to execute Contracts with organizations not funded in the initial selection process, subject to available funding, satisfactory Contract performance, and service or commodity need.

SECTION 8: CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

Under any Contract resulting from this RFA, the Awardee will be responsible for the implementation of its proposed Qualified Program, submission of required reporting, conducting required evaluation activities, and any other requirements outlined in the Awardee's application, this RFA, the grant award notification letter, and the Contract negotiated between MRC and the Awardee. Awardees are also required to meet the requirements described in this **Section 8**.

8.1 Participation in Contract Activities

Awardees are responsible for:

- 1) As MRC deems appropriate, participating in periodic phone conferences and meetings with MRC staff and other Awardees to provide updates, share lessons learned, and receive feedback; and
- 2) Participating in such activities that MRC deems necessary to monitor Qualifying Program status during the term of the Contract and support MRC objectives.

8.2 Continuing Obligation to Disclose Conflicts of Interest

In submitting applications and through the term of the Contract, Applicants are obligated to disclose any of their own interests, including interests of any vendor identified in an Applicant's application as expected to perform specific work in the proposed Qualifying Program or experience specific benefits from the proposed Qualifying Program, that may conflict with the performance of services required under any Contract resulting from this RFA, or that may be otherwise anti-competitive, as determined by MRC. MRC may require the Applicant to submit any additional relevant information regarding its financial, legal, contractual or other business interests, including those of any vendors identified in an Applicant's application as expected to perform specific work in the proposed Qualifying Program or experience specific benefits from the proposed Qualifying Program. If MRC in its sole judgment determines that an Applicant, including of any vendor identified in an Applicant's application as expected to perform specific work in the proposed Qualifying Program or experience specific benefits from the proposed Qualifying Program, possesses a conflicting interest, MRC may propose or consider any proposal of the Applicant for any measures that would eliminate or mitigate such conflicting interest to MRC's satisfaction.

SECTION 9: APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Application Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit an electronic application on the Grant Portal, found here: <https://maanfgrants.force.com/s/loginpage>. The application must be submitted by the bid opening date (deadline for applications) specified in **Section 11**.

Any technical questions regarding the Grant Portal, including regarding access issues or functionality issues, should be directed to the Grant Portal support team at MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com.

9.2 Application Contents

Applicants must follow the RFA's submission instructions carefully. Information wrongly placed or placed out of sequence may be ignored or treated as missing.

The application must be submitted through the Grant Portal. An Applicant Form Preview, attached to the RFA as **Attachment A** shows in screenshots the information that Applicants will be required to submit through the portal. Applicants must provide all required information requested in the Applicant Form and must indicate when a question or request is not applicable to its proposal.

The Applicant must also upload to the Grant Portal any required additional forms or attachments described in this RFA under **Sections 9.4 and 9.5**.

The Applicant's application is effective through the date that the Applicant executes a Contract with MRC pursuant to this RFA.

9.3 Applicant Form Electronic Signature

Applications submitted via the Grant Portal must be signed electronically by the Applicant or the Applicant's Agent. By checking the attestation that the submitter is an authorized signatory for the Applicant organization, the application will be deemed to be signed electronically by the Applicant.

9.4 Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (Mass. Substitute W-9 Form)

Applicants must submit a complete and accurate Request for Taxpayer Identification and Certification Number (Mass. Substitute W-9 Form) as part of a completed Application as described in **Section 9.2**. An original W-9 form is not required; an electronically signed or scan of wet-ink signed form is acceptable. If the Applicant's name, address, or Tax ID Number have not changed since the Applicant last submitted and executed a Mass. Substitute W-9 Form, a new Mass. Substitute W-9 Form is not required.

The Mass. Substitute W-9 Form is available at this [link](#) and also on COMMBUYS. The information on this form will be used to record the Applicant's legal address and where payments under a State Contract will be sent. The company's correct legal name and legal address must appear on this form and must be identical to the legal name and legal address on the Commonwealth Terms and Conditions. Please do not use the U.S Treasury's version of the W-9 Form.

9.5 Awardee Authorized Signatory Listing

Applicants must complete the Contractor Authorized Signatory Listing available on COMMBUYS or at this [link](#), in accordance with Comptroller requirements, as part of a complete Application as described in **Section 9.2**.

Further information on how to correctly complete the Authorized Signatory Form is provided, below.

In the table entitled “Authorized Signatory Name” and “Title,” type the names and titles of those individuals authorized to execute loan agreements, contracts, and other legally binding documents on behalf of the Applicant. Applicants are advised to keep this list as small as possible, as Awardees will be required to notify MRC of any changes. If the person signing in the signature block at the bottom of the first page of this form also will serve as an “Authorized Signatory,” that person’s name must be included in the typed table.

In the next paragraph, which begins “I certify that I am the President, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Fiscal Officer, Corporate Clerk, or Legal Counsel for the Awardee...,” if your organization does not have these titles, cross them out and handwrite the appropriate title above the paragraph.

The second page of the form (entitled “Proof of Authentication of Signature”) states that the page is optional. However, MRC requires the completion of separate second pages for each signatory listed on the first page (e.g., if three names are listed on the first page, three separate second pages, one for each signatory, must be completed).

Please note that in two places where the form states “in the presence of a notary,” this should be interpreted to mean “in the virtual presence of a notary or corporate clerk/secretary.” Either a notary or corporate clerk/secretary may authenticate the form; only one is required.

Organizations whose corporate clerks/secretaries authenticate this form are not required to obtain a Corporate Seal to complete this document.

9.6 Acceptable Forms of Signature

Effective June 15, 2021, for all 1) CTR forms, including the Standard Contract Form, W-9s, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) forms, ISAs, and other CTR-issued documents and forms, or 2) documents related to state finance and within the statutory area of authority or control of CTR (i.e. contracts, payrolls, and related supporting documentation), CTR will accept signatures executed by an authorized signatory in any of the following ways: 1. Traditional “wet signature” (ink on paper); 2. Electronic signature that is either: a. Hand drawn using a mouse or finger if working from a touch screen device; or b. An uploaded picture of the signatory’s hand drawn signature; or 3. Electronic signatures affixed using a digital tool such as Adobe Sign or DocuSign. If using an electronic signature, the signature must be visible, include the signatory’s name and title, and must be accompanied by a signature date. Please be advised that typed text of a name not generated by a digital tool such as Adobe Sign or DocuSign, even in computer-generated cursive script, or an electronic symbol, are not acceptable forms of electronic signature.

This section is not applicable to the Applicant’s application, submitted through the Grant Portal. Instead, the Applicant’s attestation will serve as the electronic signature of the application materials, as described in Section 9.3.

9.7 Applicant Certifications

By submitting an application, each Applicant certifies that:

- 1) All information provided in or as part of the application is accurate.
- 2) If awarded grant funds, the Applicant will produce receipts or other evidence that funds were used as proposed and approved and will otherwise comply with the terms of this RFA and the Contract; and
- 3) The Applicant understands that MRC may recoup the amount of any funding not used as proposed and approved.

SECTION 10: APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCESS

10.1 Application Review

- 1) Applications submitted in response to this RFA shall undergo initial review by a third-party vendor retained by MRC, who will determine compliance with the minimum requirements of this RFA. Failure to meet any such requirements may cause an Applicant or proposal to be disqualified from consideration. The third-party vendor will then compile and summarize the key information from the Applicant's application for MRC's internal Evaluation Committee (the "Committee") and make initial recommendations.
- 2) The Committee will then review the materials from the third-party vendor, and complete final evaluations and recommendations for awardees and award amounts. In addition to the information provided in an Applicant's application, the Committee may consider any relevant information about the Applicant known to MRC. The third-party vendor may provide Committee with technical assistance, as the Committee deems necessary, during its review.
- 3) The Committee will then make recommendations to the Secretary of MRC or her designee.
- 4) Applications that lack adequate detail with respect to the information required under **Section 6**, as determined by the Committee, may be considered incomplete, and may cause an Applicant or proposal to be disqualified from consideration. At its option, the Committee may seek clarification from the Applicant pursuant to **Subsection 10.5**, below.

All applications will be rated according to uniform criteria, such as comprehensiveness, innovation, clarity, responsiveness to MRC's needs and goals, effectiveness, timeline, and each application will be rated according to the following scale: "Excellent", "Good", "Fair", "Poor", or "Not Applicable (N/A)". Each rating will be accompanied by key points supporting the rating. These ratings will then be used to make recommendations for awardees and award amounts, through the following categories for funding awards: "Strongly Recommend", "Recommend", "Recommend if Funding Remains Available", or "Do Not Recommend". Higher ratings will correlate with "Strongly Recommend" or "Recommend" categories, while lower ratings will correlate with "recommend if Funding Remains Available" or "Do Not Recommend" categories.

The Committee may determine that a defect in an Applicant's application is immaterial and may, at its discretion, consider the application to meet the requirements of this RFA, with or without clarification from the applicant.

10.2 Budget and Work Plan Revisions

MRC will notify Applicants of any approved awards. After notification, selected Applicants may be required to develop and submit a revised work plan and budget, using the approved award amount as a condition of receipt of award. Work plans and budgets may need to be revised to clarify something in the initial proposals or to accommodate the approved award amount (which may be less than the Applicant requested). Revised work plans and budgets must still satisfy the requirements of this RFA as determined by MRC. Additionally, Applicants may be required to submit updated cost proposals, quotes, etc. to support revised work plans, if applicable, on request.

10.3 Non-compliance and Clarifications

- 1) MRC reserves the right to reject an Applicant's application at any time during the evaluation process if the Applicant:
 - a) Fails to demonstrate to MRC's satisfaction that it meets all requirements of this RFA or receives a rating of "Poor" in one or more sections of the evaluation.
 - b) Fails to submit all required information or otherwise satisfy all response requirements in **Sections 6 and 9**.
 - c) Has any interest that may, in MRC's sole determination, conflict with performance of services for the Commonwealth or be anti-competitive; or
 - d) Rejects or qualifies its agreement to any of the mandatory provisions of this RFA, the Contract or the Commonwealth's Standard Contract Form or Terms and Conditions.
- 2) The Committee may determine that non-compliance with an RFA requirement is not material. In such cases, the Committee may seek clarification, allow the Applicant to make minor corrections, consider the non-compliance when evaluating the response, or apply a combination of all three remedies.
- 3) The Committee may seek clarification from the Applicant if it determines some element of an Applicant's application requires clarification or correction.

SECTION 11: TIMETABLE

All dates are estimated **except** due dates for written inquiries and for receipt of Applicant applications. All times are Eastern.

#	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	RFA released	April 10, 2023
2	Deadline for receipt of written questions on the RFA (refer to RFA Subsection 12.3)	April 14, 2023
3	Bid Opening Date (Deadline for Applications)	April 28, 2023
4	Awardees and award amounts determined (anticipated)	June 9, 2023
5	Executed Contracts due from Awardees to MRC (anticipated)	June 15, 2023
6	Projected Contract start date (anticipated)	July 1, 2023

SECTION 12: ADDITIONAL GRANT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND TERMS

12.1 COMMBUYS as Official Source of Information

COMMBUYS is the official source of information for this procurement (known as a Bid in COMMBUYS terminology) and is publicly accessible at no charge at www.commbuys.com. Information contained in this RFA document and in COMMBUYS, including file attachments, announcements, or modifications, if any, and information contained in the related Frequently Asked Questions document, attached as **Attachment B**, along with any modifications thereto, are all components of the procurement.

Applicants are solely responsible for obtaining all information distributed for this procurement via COMMBUYS.

It is each Applicant's responsibility to check COMMBUYS for:

- Any amendments, addenda, announcements or modifications to this RFA, and
- Any Q&A records or updated Frequently Asked Questions document (**Attachment B**) related to this RFA.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility and will provide no accommodation to Applicants who submit a Response to this RFA based on out-of-date information or received from a source other than COMMBUYS.

COMMBUYS Registration. Applicants may elect to obtain a free COMMBUYS Seller registration which provides value-added features, including automated email notification associated with postings and modifications to COMMBUYS records. However, in order to respond to this RFA, Applicants must submit their application through the MRC Grant Portal, as described in **Sections 6.1** and **9.1**.

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The COMMBUYS system introduces terminology, which Applicants should be familiar with in order to conduct business with the Commonwealth. To view this terminology and to learn more about the COMMBUYS system, visit the [COMMBUYS Resource Center](#).

Questions specific to COMMBUYS should be made to the COMMBUYS Help Desk at commbuys@mass.gov.

Questions specific to the Grant Portal should be made to the MassGrantsSupport@mtxb2b.com

All other questions must be directed to the RFA contact, in accordance with **Section 12.2**.

12.2 Applicant Communications

Applicants are prohibited from communicating directly with any employee of MRC concerning this RFA except as specified below, and no other individual Commonwealth employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFA.

RFA Contact: MAHCBSGrants@pcgus.com

Reasonable Accommodation: Applicants with disabilities or hardships that seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of RFA information in an alternative format, must submit a written statement describing the Applicant's disability and the requested accommodation to the contact person for the RFA. MRC reserves the right to reject unreasonable requests.

12.3 RFA Inquiries

Applicants may make written inquiries concerning this RFA until no later than the date and time specified in the timetable in **Section 11** of this RFA. Written inquiries must be sent to the RFA contact at the email address listed in **Section 12.2** above. No acknowledgment of receipt will be given. MRC will review all questions and, at its discretion, prepare written responses to those it determines to be of general interest and relevant to the preparation of an application in response to the RFA. These responses will be posted on the COMMBUYS website. Only written responses will be binding on MRC.

MRC reserves the right to accept additional written questions after the date and time specified in the timetable in **Section 11** of this RFA and, at its discretion, prepare written responses to those it determines to be of general interest and relevant to the preparation of an application in response to the RFA. These additional responses will also be posted on the COMMBUYS website. However, MRC makes no guarantee that it will answer questions received after the deadline.

12.4 Electronic Communication and Update of Applicant's Contact Information

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to keep current the e-mail address of the Applicant's contact person and prospective Contract manager, if awarded a Contract, and to monitor that e-mail inbox for communications from MRC, including requests for clarification. MRC and the Commonwealth assume no responsibility if an Applicant's designated e-mail address is not current, or if technical problems, including those with the Applicant's computer, network or internet service provider (ISP) cause e-mail communications sent to or from the Applicant and MRC to be lost or rejected by any means, including e-mail or spam filtering.

12.5 Amendment or Withdrawal of RFA

MRC reserves the right to amend the RFA at any time prior to contract execution and to terminate this procurement in whole or in part at any time. If MRC decides to amend or clarify any part of this RFA, any amendment will be posted on COMMBUYS. MRC recommends that Applicants check the COMMBUYS site regularly for updates, as it is the Applicant's responsibility to remain aware of clarifications and amendments.

12.6 Funding Levels

Funding levels not specifically identified in an Applicant's response and accepted by MRC as part of a Contract will not be compensated under any Contract awarded pursuant to this RFA. The Commonwealth will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by Applicants in responding to this RFA.

12.7 Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

By responding to this RFA, Applicants agree to participate in the Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) program for receiving payments, unless the Applicant can provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. EFT is a benefit to both Awardees and the Commonwealth because it ensures fast, safe, and reliable payment directly to Awardees and saves both parties the cost of processing checks. Awardees can track and verify payments made electronically through the Comptroller's VendorWeb application. Additional information about EFT and VendorWeb is available on the [VendorWeb](#) site. Any successful Applicant must enroll in EFT.

Awardees may submit their Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization Agreement, provided by MRC, at any time prior to execution of a grant award under this RFA. It is not required as part of the Application submission.

12.8 Incorporation of RFA

This RFA and any documents an Applicant submits in response to it may be incorporated into any Contract awarded to that Applicant.

12.9 Public Records

All applications and related documents submitted in response to this RFA become public records and are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L. c. 66, § 10 and M.G.L. c. 4, § 7 subsection 26. Any statements in submitted applications that are inconsistent with these statutes will be disregarded.

MRC will not return to Applicants any applications or materials they submit in response to this RFA.

Because the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Agreement contains banking information, this form, and all information contained on this form, shall not be considered a public record and shall not be subject to public disclosure through a public records request.

12.10 Restriction on the Use of the Commonwealth Seal

Applicants and Awardees are not allowed to display the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Seal in their bid package or subsequent marketing materials if they are awarded a Contract because use of the coat of arms and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth for advertising or commercial purposes is prohibited by law.

12.11 Application Duration

The Applicant's Application shall remain in effect until any Contract with the Applicant is executed.

ⁱ Mass.gov <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/independent-living-centers>. Assessed February 2023

ⁱⁱ Mass.gov <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission>. Assessed February 2023.