

Project Description

The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education is soliciting qualifications for a consultant (or consulting team) interested in providing services to conduct a review of the Special Needs Grant Program.

Grant Program Description

The Special Needs Grant Program was established in 1986 under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:72H-4 to assist New Jersey college students who are visually impaired, deaf and hard-of-hearing, or who have learning disabilities. There are currently eight regional centers funded by the grant: five serve students with learning disabilities, two serve students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and one provides adaptive technology and training to serve students with various disabilities. The regional centers, which are located at different colleges throughout the state, deliver direct services for students enrolled at the host institutions as well as outreach and technical assistance to other colleges and the community. Additional information about the grant is available online at www.state.nj.us/highereducation/grants/special_needs.htm.

Scope of Work

Periodic evaluations of the regional centers have been conducted in the past, the last one taking place in fiscal 2004. This review will focus on the overall grant program. The Commission anticipates identifying three consultants, each with a specific expertise (learning disabilities, deaf and hard-of-hearing, and adaptive technology), but all with the same charge. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) focuses on the learning disabilities segment; the consultant selected must have expertise in the area of learning disabilities at the postsecondary level and be well informed about national and state trends in the field.

The consultant will produce a comprehensive final report addressing the following issues:

- Brief overview of national and statewide trends about college students with learning disabilities.
- Identification of critical issues facing all New Jersey colleges serving students with learning disabilities.
- Recommendations about how to address these issues, including appropriate best practices that could be implemented. Special emphasis should be placed in the area of retention, support services, and student success.
- Advantages and disadvantages of the regional center model as a means of serving college students with learning disabilities in the state. Recommendations should take into consideration how grant funds should be used in the future to provide services that benefit the maximum number of NJ students.
- The report should include data to support findings and conclusions.

A Commission staff member will be assigned as a liaison to work with the consultant in making meeting arrangements, assembling documentation, and facilitating other activities as agreed. General information about the grant program and regional centers will be provided to the consultant. Refer to Appendix A for a list of information resources available.

Amount Available and Timeline

The maximum budget available for the completion of this project is \$29,000 including travel expenses. The actual contract awarded with the consultant will depend on the proposed scope of activities and final report.

The project shall begin immediately after the contract is executed. An initial draft of the final report is due August 4, 2008. The final report must be submitted by August 22, 2008.

Proposal Instructions

- **Description of Activities**
Proposal should describe activities to be performed by the consultant including a project schedule. The project schedule must include allocation of time for orientation about the grant program by Commission staff, and a conference call or meeting with the other consultants. Activities should incorporate visits to the regional centers as well as meeting(s) with other stakeholders in the state to examine level of services currently being offered and to determine areas of unmet need. The proposal should also identify any information or data required and the need for staff assistance with the collection of any information.
- **Experience**
Consultant should include a copy of their most recent vita or resume highlighting relevant experiences and qualifications for this review activity. A writing sample should be included from any previous evaluation reports or studies. If a team approach will be employed, please identify other key personnel, their qualifications, and anticipated contributions to the review process. Applicants are welcome to provide references from other related work.
- **Budget**
The proposal should provide a breakdown of expenses associated with the review activity. Specify the number of labor hours, travel-related expenses (airfare, ground transportation, hotel, and meals), and other expenses (phone calls, postage, copying, etc.).
- **Submission Deadline**
The proposal must be received by the Commission no later than **4:00 pm EST, Monday, May 19, 2008**.
The completed proposal should be sent* to: Iris Duffield
NJ Commission on Higher Education
P.O. Box 542
Trenton, NJ 08625-0542.
Proposals may also be submitted electronically via email to iduffield@che.state.nj.us.
**Note: Delivery address for overnight is different; contact Iris Duffield for information.*

Selection/Notification Process

The Commission will review all proposals submitted by the deadline date. The proposal that best responds to the stated scope of work will be selected. The Commission anticipates notification to take place by May 23, 2008. Once the contract between the Commission and consultant is finalized, an initial payment of 25% will be advanced. The balance of funds will be released after receipt of the report.

If there are any questions about this RFQ, please contact Iris Duffield at
(609) 292-2955 or via email at iduffield@che.state.nj.us.

APPENDIX A**GENERAL INFORMATION** (*supplied to the consultant*)

- Special Needs Regional Center Brochure & DVD.
- Recent Commission Memorandum and Resolutions (April 2007 and November 2007).
- *Findings Reports: Fall 2006 Survey of New Jersey Campus Programs for Students with Disabilities.*
- Retention Data of Regional Center Students (2001-2003). Based on first-time full-time freshmen students.
- 2004-09 Request for Proposal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (*available upon request*)

- Regional Center Annual Reports.
- Regional Center Continuation Requests.
- Previous evaluation reports.