

**Title:** **Discretionary Opportunity # 1084  
Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar for Pre-College  
Program**

**Agency:** **Children & Family Services, NYS Office of  
Bureau of Contract Management**

**Contract number:** **TBD**

**Contract term:** **Five (5) years: May 1, 2022 – April 30, 2027**

**Date of issue:** **1/14/2022**

**Due date/time:** **2/11/2022 by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time**

**Location:** **Lemoyne (Upstate) and Manhattanville College (Downstate)**

**Counties:** **Statewide**

### **Background**

The New York State Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) announces a discretionary funding opportunity for qualified entities that provide a web-based technology training and developmental writing seminar (course) for high school students who are blind and attending the Pre-College Program. Please see the **Eligibility Criteria** section for additional information.

The New York State Commission for The Blind (NYSCB) provides services to legally blind individuals in New York State. NYSCB has identified a need to provide a web-based technology training and developmental writing course for high school students who are legally blind and attending the Pre-College Program for legally blind students. The contract resulting from this announcement will offer a specialized developmental writing course that includes web-based distance technology training for individuals who are blind. The proposed course must incorporate instruction on the use of both, assistive technologies for legally blind individuals, and mainstream technologies, as they are applied to a traditional college writing course. Students must receive individual and group writing instruction remotely, as they are guided in the use of the tools of the online learning environment, such as the use of an iOS access device (i.e., iPad), the electronic course management system, web conferencing, and discussion forums. The proposed course must be provided annually for a four-week period, during July and August.

The funded organization must be willing to:

- Create, develop and deliver a comprehensive web-based, technology training and developmental writing course, which includes curriculum development, web-based classroom instruction and incorporates participant assignments and evaluations.
- Train staff trainers to work with the participants to initially configure the participant's iPad. (Train the Trainer)

- Provide an evaluation of each participant's ability based upon a review of participant submitted course assignments.

### **Pre-College Program Background**

The Pre-College Program is for students who are legally blind and entering their senior year of high school. The Pre-College Program is designed to prepare participants for college life and emphasizes independence and self-advocacy in a supportive but structured environment. This program assists participants in refining their academic, social, and independent living skills before commencing their full-time college studies, through a four (4) week on-campus experience. All participants reside in student dormitories on a college campus and all Pre-College Program participants are required to take two courses: (1) a non-credit course entitled "Introduction to College Life," taught by the University, and (2) a non-credit course entitled "Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar."

It is expected that participants in the Pre-College Program will learn to advocate for themselves with professors, library personnel, student support services/offices, other campus organizations, and when participating in clubs and other social activities.

The current Pre-College Program is held on the following two (2) college campuses: Lemoyne (Upstate) and Manhattanville College (Downstate).

This advertisement is public notice that OCFS is seeking to contract with an organization to provide a web-based distance technology training and developmental writing course for high school students who are legally blind and attending the Pre-College Program for legally blind students. Please see the **Activities/Work to be Performed** section for additional information.

The purpose of this Discretionary Opportunity announcement is to invite any eligible and interested entities that believe they can satisfy this program's needs to inform OCFS by a Letter of Interest (LOI). To be considered responsive, your organization's LOI must be received no later than the due date and time specified on the first page of this announcement. OCFS intends to select one (1) contractor based on the criteria outlined in this announcement. Please see the **How to Apply** section for additional information and submission requirements.

This opportunity is authorized under Section 163 of State Finance Law as a Discretionary Purchase. OCFS intends to contract pursuant to its discretionary purchasing authority under State Finance Law Section 163(6), which authorizes purchases without a formal competitive process in certain circumstances. This includes, but is not limited to, purchases up to the Discretionary Buying Threshold from New York State Small Business Enterprises (SBE), businesses certified pursuant to Article 15-A of the New York State Executive Law, New York State certified Minority- and/or Women-Owned Enterprises (M/WBE), New York State certified Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOB), businesses selling commodities or technology that are recycled or remanufactured, or commodity purchases that are food and are grown, produced or harvested in New York State.

Primary respondents must be identified as a NYS certified Minority and Women Owned Business (MWBE), NYS small business enterprise (SBE), or a NYS Certified Service Disable Veteran-Owned Business (SDVOB) and must complete, sign and submit the Attachment 3 – Affirmation of Business Status provided with this solicitation.

### **Activities/Work to be Performed**

Funded organizations will:

Provide a web-based technology training and developmental writing course to legally blind participants enrolled in the NYSCB Pre-College Program. The following summarizes the services sought for this project.

#### **1) Curriculum Development/Updating, Train-the-Trainers and One (1) on One (1) with Trainers**

Curriculum development/Updating includes development of all aspects of the technology training and developmental writing course, including designing the curriculum, preparing the lesson plans, and creating the evaluation instruments. The curriculum which is developed must be updated periodically and kept current for the life of the contract.

In addition, the funded organization must Train the Trainers. These trainers will have significant Information Technology (IT) experience and staff provided by either the Pre-College Program or NYSCB. The trainers are responsible for working with the participants for purposes of initial configuration of the participant's iPad software. The trainers do not provide instruction to the actual content of the technology training and developmental writing course.

The scope of the Train the Trainers' training will focus on initial configuration of adaptive equipment/software and how it will interact with the funded organization's web-based, technology training and developmental writing course. The Train the Trainers' training shall be provided by the funded organization before the actual Pre-College Program and within the monthly timeframes below.

The course proposed by the funded organization should provide the following deliverables according to the specified timeframes below:

#### **February - March**

- Accessibility testing with apps to make sure that all current and potential apps are accessible and compatible with speech output software
- Review and revise curriculum, suggest new content and/or instructional methods and recommend potential apps
- Identify and train new staff (Pre-College Program staff and NYSCB staff associated with the Pre-College Program)

#### **April - May**

- Update the trainers guide with new processes, including screenshots and step-by-

step instructions

- Schedule and conduct train the trainer sessions
- Compile updated articles that cover the do's and don'ts for safety online
- Update/add to quiz questions and assignments

### June

- Create and verify participant accounts across the apps
- Schedule and conduct one (1) on one (1) demonstration sessions with trainers and participants
- Review the participants submitted writing samples and divide participants into groups for program facilitation

**Note:** Any travel costs associated with this deliverable entitled “1) Curriculum Development/Updating, Train the Trainer and One (1) on One (1) with the Trainers” must be included in the cost proposed for this deliverable within the Cost Form.

## **2) Participant Administration and Program Delivery**

The proposed course shall focus on internet skills and tools, as well as organizational strategies to prepare for class. Further, the proposed course shall simulate a college level online course emphasizing individual as well as collaborative learning. The instructional topics should include self-advocacy (how to advocate for oneself when the material is not accessible), academic skills such as researching, navigating college on-line libraries, using college “blackboards” and accessing class notes, communicating with professors/classmates through blogs and chat rooms, and “how to” sessions that cover how to create favorite lists, blogs, good web sites that are accessible, etc. The writing portion of the course is designed specifically to assess and remediate the writing skills of NYSCB participants who are applying to college. Participants shall also participate in a number of skill building writing exercises.

The classes shall be taught live, via distance learning using fully accessible teleconferencing systems and web-based materials. The classes shall be offered two (2) times per week for 1 ½ hours each, for 4 weeks, totaling 8 lessons for each participant over the 4-week period. The participants will be required to complete one (1) hour of independent, follow-up computer research or homework each week. The instructor will break the program participants into two (2) groups and each group will participate in two 1 ½ hour classes a week. In addition to the instruction time, the instructor(s) will review and grade writing assignments and provide feedback to Pre-College Program staff and participants.

Up to 55 participants will participate in the proposed course each year.

Other features of the proposed course that must be included are:

### Accessibility

- Developed expressly to work with assistive technologies.
- Eliminate physical, geographic and other barriers to access.

### Interactive & Interpersonal

- Live weekly discussions to enhance group development and motivation.
- Participants gain confidence as they acquire new skills.
- Instructors, mentors, and program alumni share their challenges and achievements with each group, enabling participants to identify and envision their personal goals.

### Skill-Based Learning

- Specific instruction (one-to-one or small group) regarding the selection and use of popular web applications with assistive technologies allowing students to get online in less time and with less frustration.
- Challenging new skills are practiced and students receive individualized, constructive feedback.
- Methods of instruction and technologies used in the classes should be selected based on accessibility, recognized best practices in education, and recommendations from experts and/or demonstrated effectiveness in the online learning setting.

NYSCB will be responsible for providing the students with all equipment required for them to attend and complete this course.

### **3) Evaluations/Post-program Assessments and Reports**

Each participant shall be required to submit individual writing and peer-review assignments, with one group writing assignment due to the course instructor(s) at the end of the program. The course instructor(s) will score the individual assignments and the final assignment and provide a final report/evaluation summarizing the participant activities and scoring information to the NYSCB Children's Program Coordinator and the NYSCB counselors working with the participant, in a format acceptable to NYSCB and within 60 days after the end date of each annual program.

### Staff Qualifications

The funded organization must employ a program supervisor that has at least four (4) years' experience in aggregate, in the following areas:

- 1) teaching developmental writing courses in a distance learning format to legally blind students;
- 2) working with accessible content management systems, developing and facilitating coursework for legally blind college students; and
- 3) directing a virtual learning environment for college students who are legally blind.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants who meet the following mandatory requirements are eligible to apply:

- Have the ability to provide the required training, web-based services and associated support to Lemoyne's campus in Syracuse and Manhattanville's campus in Purchase.
- Demonstrate how the program supervisor possesses at least four (4) years of experience in the following areas and describe how this requirement is met within the

letter of interest:

- 1) teaching developmental writing courses in a distance learning format to legally blind students;
  - 2) working with accessible content management systems, developing and facilitating coursework for legally blind college students; and
  - 3) directing a virtual learning environment for legally blind college students.
- Propose a web-based distance technology training and developmental writing course which meets all the requirements outlined in the section of this announcement entitled "Activities/Work to be Performed." **Note:** explain in your letter on interest how your organization will accomplish this. Please be specific and provide details.
  - Submit a completed Cost Form (Attachment 2) which proposes a cost for each of the following three (3) deliverables, for each year of the five (5) years of the contract:
    - 1) Curriculum development/updating, Train the Trainer and One (1) on One (1) with trainers
    - 2) Participant Administration and Program Delivery
    - 3) Evaluations/post-program Assessments and Reports
  - Be a NYS Certified M/WBE, SDVOB, and/or SBE as evidenced by completing and providing **Attachment 3 – Affirmation of Business Status**.

**Note:** the proposed costs for the deliverables above combined cannot exceed \$350,000 for the entire five-year term of the contract.

Should any alternative activities/work, extraneous terms, added conditions, qualifications or exceptions be submitted within the Letter of Interest, such proposed alternate activities/work, extraneous terms, added conditions, qualifications or exceptions will not be reviewed or considered by the OCFS/NYSCB.

### **Funding Details**

Funding for this project is contingent upon the availability of funds in the state and/or federal budgets and the number of eligible applicants that respond to this announcement. In making awards, OCFS must verify geographic coverage of the regions proposed.

NYSCB intends to award one (1) fee-based contract to provide the services outlined herein totaling no greater than \$350,000 for the five-year term of the contract.

### **Payment**

The funded organization will be paid based on the original costs proposed and upon completion of the following three (3) deliverables:

1. Curriculum development/updating, Train the Trainer and One (1) on One (1) with Trainers
2. Participant Administration and Program Delivery
3. Evaluations/post-program Assessments and Reports

No later than 60 days after the conclusion of each program, the funded organization must submit a final report summarizing the student activities and scoring information to the NYSCB Children's Program Coordinator in a format acceptable to NYSCB.

The funded organization may not request nor accept payments from any NYSCB participant or other individual or entity for any services provided under the contract resulting from this announcement.

The services will be procured with Federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) grant. The Federal VR grant will pay 78.7 percent of the total costs of the program or approximately \$275,450 of the total cost. The remaining funds will be provided from non-federal sources.

### **Term of Contract**

Contract(s) awarded in response to this Discretionary Opportunity announcement will be for **Five (5) Years**. The anticipated start date is **May 1, 2022**, and the anticipated end date is **April 30, 2027**. Funding is anticipated to be available for the first year of the contract. The award of a contract does not guarantee that funding will be available for subsequent years. Contractors may not begin providing services before the contract start date; OCFS has no obligation to pay for services rendered before the New York State Office of the State Comptroller and the Office of the Attorney General approve the contract.

### **How to Apply**

To be considered eligible, interested parties must complete and submit all required documents to this Discretionary Opportunity announcement conforming with the format and content requirements as explained. A response that does not provide all the information requested may be subject to rejection. The response should contain sufficient information to assure OCFS of its accuracy. The information provided should, wherever possible, verify that your organization meets the requirements in the **Eligibility Criteria** section of this Discretionary Opportunity announcement.

**Each applicant is required to complete and provide the following documents:**

- **Attachment 1 – Letter of Interest**
- **Attachment 2 – Cost Form**
- **Attachment 3 – Affirmation of Business Status**

Additionally, each applicant should provide the following documents at the time of application:

- [OCFS-2647, EO 177 Certification](#)
- [OCFS-4821, CMS User Authorization](#)

**Applicants must submit these documents via email to [RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov) no later than the deadline specified on the first page of this announcement.**

Please enter “**DISC # 1084 Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar for Pre-College**” in the subject line of the email submission of your application and identify the name of the applicant in the body of the email and in the filenames of attached documents

to ensure your submission is processed efficiently. **Early submissions are encouraged as late responses may be subject to rejection.**

Please limit your Letter of Interest to a maximum of **50** page(s), Arial 12-point font, single line spacing and one-inch margins. Please see the **Attachment 1 – Sample Letter of Interest** provided for your reference.

### **Questions**

Questions must be submitted via e-mail to [RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov) before the due date and time of this announcement. Please submit your question with adequate time for response; OCFS recommends allowing at least five business days. Be sure to put “**DISC # 1084 Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar for Pre-College Program**” in the subject line. **Late questions may not be addressed.**

Under the requirement of the Procurement Lobbying Act, all communications regarding advertised projects are to be channeled only through the primary contact identified herein.

### **Evaluation Process**

An internal review by OCFS will confirm eligibility. This Discretionary Opportunity announcement is not a guarantee or promise of funding. Available funding to support this initiative will be limited to the amount(s) appropriated in the enacted budget for this purpose and will be awarded among those interested organizations who are deemed to meet the eligibility requirements.

OCFS may require additional information from an organization before deciding whether the interested organization is eligible and can supply the requested commodities or services. If OCFS requests additional information, it must be provided within five business days from request.

Upon determination of eligibility, OCFS will notify eligible organizations of their status and the proposed award amount (if any) and request a work plan and budget with justifications as well as other completed documents necessary to develop contracts.

### **OCFS Reserved Rights**

OCFS reserves the right to withdraw, amend or postpone this announcement, without notice, and without liability, to any applicant, or other party, and may exercise these rights at any time. In addition, OCFS reserves the right to:

- place a monetary cap on the funding amount made in each contract award;
- change any of the schedule dates stated in the announcement;
- make an award under this announcement in whole or in part;
- disqualify any applicant whose conduct and/or LOI fails to conform to the requirements of this announcement;
- reject any proposal if, in the sole discretion of OCFS, it determines the applicant is not a responsible vendor;

- request all applicants who submitted LOI to present supplemental information clarifying their proposals either in writing or by formal presentation;
- direct all organizations who submitted LOIs to prepare modifications addressing announcement amendments;
- make funding decisions that maximize compliance with and address the outcomes identified in this announcement;
- fund only one portion, or selected activities, of the selected applicant's LOI and/or adopt all or part of the selected applicant's LOI based on federal and state requirements;
- eliminate any announcement requirements unmet by all applicants, upon notice to all parties that submitted LOIs;
- waive procedural technicalities, or modify minor irregularities, in proposals received, after notification to the applicant involved;
- correct any arithmetic errors in any proposal, or make typographical corrections to proposals, with the concurrence of the applicant;
- negotiate with the eligible applicant(s) prior to contract award;
- require that all proposals be held valid for a minimum of 180 days from the closing date for receipt of applications, unless otherwise expressly provided for in writing;
- fund any or all of the proposals received in response to this announcement. However, issuance of this announcement does not commit OCFS to fund any proposals. OCFS can reject any proposals submitted;
- use the LOI submitted in response to this announcement as part of an approved contract. At the time of contract development, awardees may be asked to provide additional budget and program information for the final contract;
- utilize any and all ideas submitted in the LOI received where an award is ultimately made;
- make inquiries of third parties, including but not limited to applicant's references, with regard to the applicant's experience, or other matters deemed relevant by OCFS. By submitting a LOI in response to this announcement, the applicant gives its consent to any inquiry made by OCFS;
- where applicable, require contractors to participate in a formal evaluation of the program to be developed by OCFS. Contractors may be required to collect data for these purposes. The evaluation design will maintain participants' confidentiality and recognize practical constraints of collecting this kind of information;
- when applicable consider statewide distribution and regional distribution within New York City, including borough distribution methodology, in evaluating proposals; and
- reject any extraneous terms, alternate activities/work to be performed, added conditions, or exceptions stated by applicants within their LOI. This includes, but is not limited to, proposed changes to the standard terms and conditions of the resulting contract(s).

### **Contract Documents**

The applicant must review the contract terms and conditions of the contract template provided below.

If applying, your organization must read, understand, and accept all provisions of Appendix A – Standard Clauses for NYS Contracts. Appendix A contains important

information related to the contract to be entered into as a result of this Discretionary Opportunity announcement and will be incorporated, without change or amendment, into the contract entered into between OCFS and the selected organization(s). By submitting a response to the Discretionary Opportunity announcement, your organization agrees to comply with all the provisions of Appendix A. Please review the sample non-grant contract template, which includes the Appendix A, available at:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/docs/Non-Grant-Contract-Template.pdf>.

In addition, the following documents will be required prior to contracting:

- [Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire](#) (if applicable)
- [Proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance](#) (if applicable)
- [Proof of Disability Benefits Coverage](#) (if applicable)
- [Appendix A-3, Federal Assurances and Certifications](#) (if applicable)
- [OCFS-4631, MWBE Utilization Plan Form](#) (if applicable)
- [OCFS-4629, Project Staffing Plan Form](#)
- [OCFS-3460, Equal Employment Opportunity \(EEO\) Policy Statement](#)

### **State Finance Law §139-I; Statement on Sexual Harassment in Bids**

New York State Finance Law §139-I, effective January 1, 2019, requires, in relevant part, that “[e]very bid . . . made to the state or any public department or agency thereof, where competitive bidding is required by statute, rule or regulation, for work or services performed or to be performed or goods sold or to be sold, shall contain [a] statement subscribed by the bidder and affirmed by such bidder as true under the penalty of perjury. . . [that] ‘[b]y submission of this bid, each bidder and each person signing on behalf of any bidder certifies, and in the case of a joint bid each party thereto certifies as to its own organization, under penalty of perjury, that the bidder has and has implemented a written policy addressing sexual harassment prevention in the workplace and provides annual sexual harassment prevention training to all of its employees. Such policy shall, at a minimum, meet the requirements of section two hundred one-g of the labor law.’” The contractor must provide the foregoing certification before any award being made by OCFS. For additional guidance on drafting an appropriate sexual harassment policy and developing appropriate training please refer to State Finance Law §139-I and <https://www.ny.gov/combating-sexual-harassment-workplace/employers#top>

### **Other Contracting Requirements**

1. If applicable, Not-for-profit organizations must be registered in the NYS Grants Gateway and complete the Vendor Prequalification process before contract execution per [New York State Division of Budget Bulletin H-1032 Revised](#), dated July 16, 2014.
2. Executive Order 177 directs New York State agencies and authorities not to enter into any contracts with entities that have institutional policies or practices that fail to address the harassment and discrimination of individuals on the basis of their age, race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status, military status, or other protected basis. The contractor must provide the [EO 177 certification statement](#) before any award being made by OCFS.

3. Sections 57 and 220 of the Workers' Compensation Law (WCL) and section 142 of the State Finance Law require that businesses contracting with New York State have and maintain and [provide evidence of appropriate workers' compensation and disability benefits insurance coverage](#). If an award is made from this announcement, updated proof of coverage must be provided during contract development. Failure to submit the proof will delay the contract development process and may result in the award being rescinded. Municipalities are not required to show proof of coverage.
4. Section 163(9)(f) of the NY State Finance Law requires that a state agency determine that a bidder is responsible before awarding that bidder a state contract. Vendor responsibility will be determined based on the information provided by the bidder, online, through the [New York State VendRep System Questionnaire](#) or through a paper copy of the [Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire](#). OCFS will review the information provided before making an award.
5. By submitting an LOI in response to this solicitation or by assuming the responsibility of a contract awarded hereunder, bidder/contractor (or any assignee) certifies that it is not on the "Prohibited Entities List," as defined by the *Entities Determined To Be Non-Responsive Bidders/Offerers Pursuant to The New York State Iran Divestment Act of 2012* (the Act), which is posted on the OGS website at <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/about/reg/docs/ListofEntities.pdf> and further certifies that it will not utilize on such contract any subcontractor that is identified on the "Prohibited Entities List." Bidder/contractor is advised that should it seek to renew or extend a contract awarded in response to the solicitation, it must provide the same certification at the time the contract is renewed or extended.
6. All offerers and their employees must be aware of and comply with the requirements of the New York State Public Officers Law, and all other appropriate provisions of New York State law and all resultant codes, rules and regulations from state laws establishing the standards for business and professional activities of state employees and governing the conduct of employees of firms, associations and corporations in business with the state. In signing the proposal, each offerer guarantees knowledge and full compliance with those provisions for any dealings, transactions, sales, contracts, services, offers, relationships, etc. involving the state and/or state employees. Failure to comply with those provisions may result in disqualification from the bidding process and in other civil or criminal proceedings as required by law: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/PBO>
7. Pursuant to New York State Executive Law Article 15-A and Parts 140-145 of Title 5 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations, OCFS is required to promote opportunities for the maximum feasible participation of New York State-certified Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) and the employment of minority group members and women in the performance of OCFS contracts. If applicable, a contractor on any contract resulting from this procurement must document its good faith efforts to provide meaningful participation by MWBE as subcontractors and suppliers in the performance of the contract. To that end, by submitting a response to this opportunity, the respondent agrees that OCFS may withhold payment pursuant to any contract awarded as a result of this announcement

pending receipt of the required MWBE documentation. The directory of MWBE can be viewed at: <https://ny.newnycontracts.com>. OCFS will request any necessary completed MWBE documents from the contractor during the contract development process.

8. If applicable, Not-for-profit vendors must be registered with the New York State Office of the Attorney General as a charitable organization, and the registration must be up-to-date at the time of contracting. Vendors must be sure all their documents are up-to-date and comply with the vendor responsibility requirements as outlined below. To determine the status of your charity's registration information, contact: [https://www.charitiesnys.com/RegistrySearch/search\\_charities.jsp](https://www.charitiesnys.com/RegistrySearch/search_charities.jsp)

### **Contact Information**

#### **Primary contact:**

Director of Contracts  
Office of Children & Family Services  
52 Washington Street  
Room 202S – Procurement Unit  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
[RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov)

#### **Submit to contact:**

Director of Contracts  
NYS Office of Children & Family Services  
52 Washington Street  
Room 202S – Procurement Unit  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
[RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov)

### **Attachments**

Please see the following attachments to this announcement, which are available on The New York State Contract Reporter (Contract Reporter) website at <https://www.nyscr.ny.gov> or the OCFS website at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/>.

**Attachment 1 – Letter of Interest\***

**Attachment 2 – Cost Form\***

**Attachment 3 – Affirmation of Business Status**

\* Attachments marked with an asterisk **must** be completed and included with your bid proposal.