

Transition Supports for Youth with Disabilities: FAQs on Training and Implementation Support Provider Opportunity



The American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) announced a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking qualified entities to provide training and implementation support for high school programs to help prepare youth with disabilities to achieve success after high school. The selected provider(s) will participate in a large-scale evaluation project conducted by AIR, UNCC, and other partners (“the study team”) for the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. The RFP is available on AIR’s website ([here](#)). Proposals are due on October 1, 2021.

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers provide more information about the project.

Program Design

What population(s) of students will Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 serve?

All high school students with IEPs who are enrolled in study schools and are about two years from high school completion or the maximum age for special education, as applicable, in Fall 2022 (the time of enrollment in the study) will be eligible to participate in one of these strategies. Thus, the provider’s proposed programs must support students with a range of post-school goals, disability types, and needs for accommodations.

How many students will participate in Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 under this study?

The evaluation will enroll a total of 3,000 eligible students. The study team will use a lottery to assign 1,000 participating students to Strategy 1 and another 1,000 participating students to Strategy 2 (with 1,000 other participating students assigned to receive typical transition supports only).ⁱ The study team anticipates recruiting between 80 and 100 relatively large schools in 16 districts across the U.S. to meet these sample-size requirements.

What is the role of providers in shaping the program structure for delivering Strategy 1 and/or Strategy 2?

Providers will be expected to define programs that reflect the specifications for Strategy 1 and/or Strategy 2 described in the RFP. A well-defined program must include detailed plans for activities, materials, and other supports for instructors to use when delivering Strategy 1 or Strategy 2.

When responding to the RFP, providers must describe fully detailed programs that build on the RFP’s specifications for the core components. Proposed programs must be based primarily on existing activities and materials that the provider adapts, as needed, based on the RFP’s requirements.

Will the project include funds for program development?

The RFP does not include provisions to fund program development that occurs after providers are selected for the project. However, some customization or adjustment of existing program activities and materials may be necessary to ensure that the overall program is cohesive and meets the needs of the project.

What duties will “instructors” have? Are they existing school staff with other ongoing responsibilities?

Instructors will deliver the Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 programs in high schools through group-based sessions and 1-1 sessions with students, outreach and engagement with each student’s parents, and coordination with IEP teams and transition specialists.ⁱⁱ

Participating school districts and the study team will hire instructors specifically for this project. Most instructors will work full time in their program delivery role and will not have other school responsibilities.

What are the anticipated program caseloads for instructors?

The study team estimates that each full-time Strategy 1 instructor will work with about 38 students (and their parents) across up to 3 schools, and each full-time Strategy 2 instructor will work with about 23 students (and their parents) across approximately 1 to 2 schools.ⁱⁱⁱ

How much time will students and parents spend with instructors?

For Strategy 1, students will spend at least 60 hours with instructors during three semesters (Spring 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024), and parents will spend at least 7 hours with instructors over this period. These time estimates assume (a) for students, a combination of small-group sessions and 1-1 sessions; and (b) for parents, a group orientation, an initial meeting with each student’s parents, and monthly check-ins.

For Strategy 2, students will spend at least 85 hours with instructors during three semesters and one summer (Spring 2023, Summer 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024), and parents will spend at least 12 hours with instructors over this period. These time estimates use the same assumptions as for Strategy 1, plus additional student time in 1-1 sessions with instructors, primarily during Summer 2023; and additional parent time spent in check-ins with instructors, which will continue during the summer.

Will the same instructors deliver both Strategy 1 and Strategy 2?

We anticipate that different instructors would deliver the programs for Strategy 1 and Strategy 2. That is, one set of instructors will be hired for Strategy 1, and another set will be hired for Strategy 2.

Provider Tasks

Will providers recruit districts and schools?

No, the recruitment effort will be undertaken by the study team. Providers do not need to obtain letters of support or commitment from schools or districts in order to submit a proposal. However, the provider will support the study team’s recruitment efforts during the 2021-22 school year by producing program information materials to be shared with districts and schools and helping to address district or school staff questions about the programs.

Will providers identify or enroll students in the project?

No, the study team will work with schools to secure student participation and informed consent. However, the provider will support these efforts by producing program information materials that can be used for differentiated outreach across a range of student groups.

Will providers be directly involved in hiring instructors?

No, the study team will work with districts to hire instructors. However, the provider will support these efforts by developing and helping districts implement recommended criteria to guide the hiring of instructors, building on minimum instructor qualifications that are stated in the RFP, and providing additional input as needed.

What roles will providers play in working with instructors?

Providers will train instructors, help them coordinate with school staff to work out the logistics of program delivery, and conduct other activities to help them prepare to launch the programs. Providers will also support the instructors over the 2-year implementation period, supplying materials for instructors to use in their work with students and parents, and providing monitoring and technical assistance to ensure that the Strategy 1 and 2 programs are delivered with fidelity.

How many instructors will providers need to support?

Based on the anticipated sample sizes and caseloads described above, the study team expects to work with districts to hire approximately 27 instructors for Strategy 1 and 45 instructors for Strategy 2. As noted previously, these instructors will work with students and parents across up to 100 schools in 16 districts, with separate instructors for Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 working within each school. Depending on the school size, a full-time instructor delivering each strategy may work across multiple schools within a district (up to 3 schools for Strategy 1, and 1 to 2 schools for Strategy 2).

What data will providers need to collect and report?

Providers will store, organize, and review program implementation monitoring data using the forms/logs they have for the purposes of monitoring implementation. These data will come from training records completed by providers, program logs that instructors will use to track program delivery and student progress, assessment forms that providers complete when visiting schools to gauge implementation readiness or to observe ongoing delivery/implementation, and forms that providers use to track technical assistance activities. The provider will use these data to guide ongoing implementation supports and deliver the data to the study team for the purpose of the evaluation. (Providers will not need to collect other evaluation data.)

Proposals and Awards

Are providers expected to include program materials with their proposals?

Yes, providers are expected to provide existing materials that they propose to use as part of their detailed program plans for Strategy 1 and/or Strategy 2. Providers do not need to have already refined these materials for the project, but they should demonstrate how they could do so, if selected.

Will proposals be considered from providers who currently lack the capacity to train and support the full set of instructors for Strategy 1 and/or Strategy 2?

We anticipate awarding to qualified entities who submit strong proposals with demonstrated capacity to fulfill the scope of required tasks for this project. However, we recognize that some interested entities may not have the staffing or infrastructure in place to provide training and implementation support at the scale required for this project. The study team encourages providers to collaborate and form consortia, as needed, to meet the requirements of this project. Additionally, the study team will accept proposals from providers who do not yet have this capacity but propose a clear plan for building such capacity and have demonstrated experience with similar capacity-building in the past.

How many awards will be made?

The number of awards will depend on the scope, scale, and strength of the proposals received. The project might select a single provider that can support delivery of Strategy 1 and Strategy 2, or one provider per strategy, or multiple providers that each support both strategies, as well as multiple providers that each focus on one strategy.

What amount of funding is available for providers?

The total project budget for providers is approximately \$3,000,000 subdivided across the set of selected providers for Strategy 1 and/or Strategy 2. Due to the additional intensity of and activities in Strategy 2, the study team expects the cost of providing Strategy 2 would be greater than the cost of providing Strategy 1.

What is the nature of the award (e.g., grant, direct contract, or subcontract)?

Each selected provider will enter into a firm fixed-price subcontract with AIR, which is conducting the overall evaluation project through a contract funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

ⁱ The study team will use the lottery to randomly assign students *within* schools for the evaluation. Each school will have three groups of students: those assigned to Strategy 1, those assigned to Strategy 2, and those who will receive typical transition supports only.

ⁱⁱ We use “parents” to refer to the primary adults who provide guidance and support to students in the study. These adults may include biological, adoptive, and foster parents, guardians, and other family members.

ⁱⁱⁱ Estimated student caseloads are averages. Actual caseloads for specific instructors might differ depending on the needs of the students or schools they support.