



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**NOTICE OF CONTRACT OPPORTUNITY
Fiscal Year 2026**

INNOVATIVE PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (Pre-ETS)

Announcement Date: July 1, 2025

Technical Assistance Workshop: July 7, 2025 and July 10, 2025

Application Due Date: July 22, 2025

**Robert Asaro-Angelo
Commissioner**

**Innovative Pre-Employment Transition Services
Notice of Contract Opportunity – FY 2026**

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Take Notice that, in compliance with N.J.S.A. 52:14-34.4 et seq., the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (hereinafter “the Department” or “NJDOLE”) regularly publishes on its website all notices of fund availability pertaining to federal or state contract funds, which may be awarded by the Department. The notices of fund availability may be found on the Department’s website under the heading “Research & Information” and the subheading “Contract Opportunities” - <https://www.nj.gov/labor/research-info/contracts.shtml>.

A. NAME OF CONTRACT PROGRAM

Innovative Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

B. PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE FUNDS WILL BE USED

In response to the dynamic landscape of today's job market, there is an imperative need to acknowledge the communication gaps and lack of awareness that exists in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). To address these concerns, we are seeking robust Pre-ETS programs that are tailored to equip Students with Disabilities (SWD) with the skills and experiences essential for success. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is issuing a Notice of Contract Opportunity (NCO) to identify providers with comprehensive SWD programs that employ innovative approaches to Pre-ETS aimed at reducing communication gaps and improve awareness of Pre-ETS and DVRS. This initiative aims to bridge the gap between secondary education and employment for SWD.

DVRS is seeking providers who will implement innovative and unique methodologies in delivering Pre-ETS. These methodologies may include new, creative, interdisciplinary, scalability, sustainability, technology integration, and person-centered approaches. Providers should also focus on serving SWD, specifically those affected by substance use disorders, justice-involved, mental health diagnoses, or underrepresented youth (youth who may face systemic barriers due to factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, geographic location, or immigration status). In addition, services should improve awareness of Pre-ETS, increase outreach, and foster communication between DVRS, schools, students, families, community resources, and other stakeholders.

These methodologies may include new, creative, interdisciplinary, scalability, sustainability, technology integration, and person-centered approaches. Examples could include:

- Virtual Reality Career Exploration – Use Virtual Reality technology to provide immersive job exploration experiences. Students can “visit” different workplaces and interact with virtual mentors to gain a better understanding of various career paths.
- Work Based Learning Projects – Develop collaborative projects where students work on real world tasks for local businesses and non-profits. This could include virtual internships, remote project assignments, or on-site job shadowing.
- Self-Advocacy workshops with role playing – Incorporate interactive role-playing scenarios into self-advocacy training. Students can practice advocating for their needs in various settings such as job interviews, college admissions, or workplace meetings.
- Peer Mentorship Programs – Establish a peer mentorship program where older students who have successfully transitioned to post-secondary education or employment mentor

- younger Pre-ETS participants. This provides relatable role models and practical advice.
- Entrepreneurship Bootcamp – Offer an entrepreneurship program where students learn about starting and running their own businesses. They can develop business plans, pitch ideas, and even create small projects or businesses.
- Digital Skills Training – Provide specialized training on digital literacy and advances technology skills. Topics could include coding, graphic design, digital marketing, artificial Intelligence, and using productivity tools appropriately.
- Inclusive Social Activities – Organize social events and clubs that focus on building social and workplace readiness skills. Activities could include team-building exercises, public speaking clubs, and group outings to various community settings.

Providers should also focus on serving SWD, specifically those affected by substance use disorders, justice-involved, mental health diagnoses, and underrepresented youth (youth who may face systemic barriers due to factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, geographic location, or immigration status). SWD who belong to each of these special populations experience higher rates of unemployment and poverty, lower educational opportunities and attainments, a deficit of work experience opportunities, and hardships of a unique nature and higher degree than the broader youth population.

DVRS will administer the Innovative Pre-ETS program to provide specialized services to SWD to enhance the current practices and systems intended to serve their needs. DVRS expects that this program will focus on partnerships and collaboration between state and local agencies and systems to create a coordinated process in ensuring the healthy career development of SWD.

Programs are required to provide Pre-ETS to SWD who also meet at least one of the marginalized populations outlined above per application submission.

C. AVAILABLE FUNDING

DVRS will be awarding a total of five (5) contracts for this initiative. The total amount of funding available for this program in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 will be up to \$2,750,000 with no more than \$550,000 per contract per year and is contingent upon the availability of funding from the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). As part of our strategic distribution plan, we will implement a deduction of 10% of the annual total contract value to accommodate administrative costs. In addition, \$10,000 yearly is to be reserved from the total contract amount for special accommodations and cannot be used for any other purpose. The contract period is expected to be for a 1-year period and is estimated to begin on or before October 1, 2025, to September 30, 2026. This contract is renewable for successful applicants through 9/30/2031 and is contingent upon the availability of Federal funding. Any unused funds for a contracted year will be returned to DVRS.

The applicant's budget must be well considered, necessary for the implementation of the program, and within the funding parameters. Final amounts will be determined at the time of pre-contract revisions. Ineligible, inappropriate or undocumented costs will be removed from the funding request.

Failure to meet performance goals and expend funds may impact current, continuation, and future contract funding opportunities. DVRS reserves the right to rescind any unspent funds and use this solicitation and competition to extend contracts of successful applicants, contingent upon available funding.

D. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants must be organizations with the capacity to serve people with disabilities. Eligible applicants include:

- Private or public non-profit organizations
- Independent Living Centers (ILC)
- Faith-Based Organizations (FBO); and
- Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

Organizations currently receiving funds as part of an existing Pre-ETS contact with DVRS are not eligible to apply.

Applicants must have the capacity to operate this program for the full duration of the five-year cycle and must be in good standing with NJDOL's Division of Employer Accounts. Any organization that has an outstanding liability to NJDOL will not be able to have its contract executed by DVRS until the liability is resolved.

Applicants must demonstrate their experience serving SWD and their capacity to provide Pre-ETS.

E. TARGETED POPULATIONS

Applications must target SWD (an individual with a disability in a secondary, post-secondary, or other recognized education program who falls within the requirements for minimum and maximum age, and is either: 1. Eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the IDEA or 2. Is a student who is an individual with a disability, for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.), ages 14-21, in one of the following targeted marginalized youth populations:

1. Youth diagnosed with a substance use disorders
2. Identifying as LGBTQ+
3. Justice-involved youth
4. Individuals with a mental health diagnosis
5. Underrepresented Youth (youth who may face systemic barriers due to factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, geographic location, or immigration status)

F. REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY

Organizations that have at least two years' experience and have a demonstrated track record of success in providing Pre-ETS to SWD are eligible to apply. **Previous recipients of Pre-ETS contracts who did not meet the deliverables of 80% need not apply.**

Applicants must also have experience managing a government contract which includes program reporting and meeting measurable outcomes. Applicants will be expected to coordinate all aspects of the contract (i.e., outreach and recruitment; program services; project and spending plan; contract project monitoring and reporting; and fiscal management). Successful providers must be prepared to have systems in place to track, document and report all outcomes.

Performance measures for successful providers will include:

- Provide services that cover all 5 required areas of Pre-ETS
- Participants will explore a minimum of 3 to 5 career pathways to increase knowledge of the world of work
- Increase the number of SWD entering post-secondary education and/or competitive integrated employment
- Enroll the contracted number of participants to serve
 - 40% of the contracted enrollment number must be met by the mid-point of the contract period
- Strengthening staff capacity and infrastructure to support Pre-ETS staff training
- Increase outreach, and foster communication between DVRS, schools, students, families, community resources, and other stakeholders

Grantees will be required to collect and report specific data regarding demographics and services provided to each participant. The process of reporting the completed data will be provided to the grantee upon the awarding of funds.

Grantees must submit monthly fiscal reports and will be paid on a monthly reimbursement method, after the financial report has been submitted to and approved by DVRS. The process for reporting will be provided to the grantee upon awarding of funds.

The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and NJ Treasury Tax Clearance Certificate must also be included at the time of submittal. See links below for more information.

- UEI: <https://sam.gov/content/home>
- NJ Tax Clearance Certificate: <https://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/busasst.shtml>

G. APPLICATION PROCESS

Beginning with FY26, NJDVRS will accept, review, approve and manage Innovative Pre-ETS contracts electronically using IGX. Applicants must first submit a letter of intent to apply. The letter of intent should be submitted via e-mail to DVRSPreETS@dol.nj.gov by 12:00 p.m. on Monday, July 7, 2025, and must include:











- Applicant agency name,

- Business name (if different from agency name),
- Name of person responsible for submitting application (Agency Official),
- Federal Employee Identification Number (FEIN),
- Unique Entity Identifiers (UEIs), and
- Names, titles, and e-mails of the mandatory technical assistance workshop attendees.

To receive access to IGX, applicants must register at: <https://njdol.intellicontracts.com>. It is imperative that registration be submitted at the time the letter of intent is completed. You will receive an e-mail message confirming that your account has been validated. NJDVRS will then provide access to the application. After receiving the confirmation, eligible entities will have access to complete and submit their contract application online. Technical requirements for IGX can be viewed at <https://njdol.intellicontracts.com>.

Applicants must agree to the terms and conditions as outlined in the Standard Assurances and Certifications and General Provisions to begin completing the application.

The application must consist of the following components:

Required	Component
	Applicant Information
	Project Location
	Current/Previous NJDVRS Funding
	Performance Deliverables
	Statement of Need
	Organizational Commitment and Capacity
	Program Narrative
	Budget Forms (Schedules A-C) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule A Personnel Justification Page(s)
	Cost Summary
	Miscellaneous Attachments to be Uploaded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lease/Rental Agreement (if applicable per Cost Guidelines) • Tax Clearance • Liability Insurance • UEI

If any of the above required components are not completed, submitted, signed and dated, your proposal will be considered incomplete and, therefore, may not be reviewed by the selection committee.

The forms described below must be accessed and submitted through the “Forms” menu in IGX:

1. Applicant Information

Applicants must complete all the required information for the primary contact, chief executive officer, application organization, project director and Authorized Official.

2. Project Location

Applicants must enter the address of the Innovative Pre-ETS site location and select the counties the proposed program will serve.

3. Current/Previous Funding

Applicants funded by NJDVRs currently and within the last three years must complete the required information.

4. Performance Deliverables

Applicants must select the target population they are applying to serve from the available dropdown options.

Applicants must also enter their proposed enrollment numbers on this page in IGX (a minimum of 20 enrollments is required), which will automatically calculate the expected performance metrics in accordance with the Innovative Pre-ETS Program Requirements. The enrollment number may be negotiated during pre-contract revisions.

5. Statement of Need (Uploaded to Required Documents)

A need is defined as the difference between the current status and the outcomes and/or standard(s) that the applicant would like to achieve. Demonstrate the need for a project, in relation to the NCO, and provide documentation that substantiates the need.

Documentation must include demographics, description of target population(s), student data, personnel data and research.

Note: *The Statement of Need document should include page numbers and must not exceed 5 pages.*

6. Organizational Commitment and Capacity (Uploaded to Required Documents)

Applicants should describe the extent of their organizational commitment to the program. The applicant should include their experience(s) and successes working with the targeted population and implementing services similar to the program services described within this NCO. Applicants should make the connection to how their capacities will support enrolling the proposed number of participants.

Staff who will be directly serving the participants of this program must meet the following requirements: a minimum of an Associate's Degree in a Human Service related field from an accredited college and two years of related Human Services experience. Education, certifications, experience and two years of professional work experience with individuals with disabilities or performing direct counseling or advocacy activities for individuals with disabilities in a rehabilitation agency, facility, or school setting designed to increase the employability of persons with disabilities, may be substituted for the above education. Provide resumes of staff responsible for performing each activity and service as soon as they are identified. Indicate the reporting structure by providing an organizational chart. Provide a comprehensive listing of specific tasks performed by the person in this title as they relate to this project.

Note: *The Organizational Commitment and Capacity document should include page numbers and must not exceed 5 pages.*

7. Program Narrative (Uploaded to Required Documents)

Applicants must submit a program narrative which outlines a comprehensive plan of recruitment, activities, services, and strategies to implement each component of the Innovative Pre-ETS program and to successfully meet or exceed the performance measures listed in section F. Successful applications will clearly address each service component in separate sections within the narrative.

Applicants should additionally address the following questions when crafting their program narrative:

- a. Include a list of recruitment sources/partners to ensure diverse entry points to the program.
- b. Provide a participant pathway/service-flow from recruitment through placement? (Notate the sequence of services and potential timeframes, if applicable.)

Note: *The Program Narrative document should include page numbers and must not exceed 15 pages.*

8. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Partnership Agreement Forms (Uploaded to Required Attachments, if applicable)

Applicants are required to develop MOU with the school districts in their catchment areas and submit with their application. Applicants who plan to partner with other entities to provide any of the services listed in the Program Requirements must submit a Partnership Agreement with that entity as part of their application. The roles of each partnership must also be addressed within the program narrative. Forms must be included for each recruitment/referral partner.

9. Budget Forms (Schedules A-C)

Following the attached Cost Guidelines, complete Budget Schedules A through C to identify personnel costs, indirect costs and direct student services costs.

DVRS has limited the cost categories to the following areas:

➤ **Schedule A - Personnel Costs**

This budget category includes salaries for program staff and fringe benefits. For personnel who are administrative staff only, you must check the administrative box to the left of the position title. All personnel designated as administrative staff will count towards your indirect cost cap which cannot exceed 15% of your total contract funds requested.

- **Justification Page-** Each page of Schedule A has a Justification Page attached. A justification for all personnel/positions listed on Schedule A must include a designation as an administrative role (if applicable), number of work hours per week, programmatic roles and responsibilities, and relevant education and experience.

➤ **Schedule B – Indirect Costs**

This budget category includes cost categories that are NOT considered direct participant services or expenses and are further detailed in the Cost Guidelines. Each indirect cost category selected must have a clear justification or description of the selection. All costs included on Schedule B will count towards your indirect cost cap which is 15% of your total contract funds requested.

Applicants should strive to select from the existing cost categories and subcategories provided within the schedule's dropdown list. Line items that fall within the same cost category and subcategory should be entered as one row when possible, and should identify the specific items and their cost breakdowns within the justification

➤ **Schedule C – Direct Services**

This budget category includes cost categories that are considered to directly benefit program participants and are further detailed in the Cost Guidelines. Each direct service cost category selected must have a clear justification or description of the selection.

Applicants should strive to select from the existing cost categories and subcategories provided within the schedule's dropdown list. Line items that fall within the same cost category and subcategory should be entered as one row when possible, and should identify the specific items and their cost breakdowns within the justification

Note: In accordance with the VR cost principles outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations, which stipulate that all expenses must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the program (2 C.F.R. §§ 200.403, 200.404, and 200.405), NJ DVRS has established an administrative fee of 10% that will be deducted from your total contract

award. This fee is intended to effectively cover the costs associated with managing the contract.

10. Cost Summary

Once all budget schedule costs have been entered into their respective schedules, the information will be carried to the Cost Summary page.

11. Other Required Documents

The below attachments must be uploaded:

- **Tax Clearance Certificate**
- **Liability Insurance**
- **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)**
- **Lease/Rental Agreement (If applicable per Cost Guidelines)**
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Partnership Agreement Forms**

12. Miscellaneous Documents

In this section, you can upload any additional information or documents that will support your contract application or are required by your organization or special circumstances.

H. Evaluation Criteria

All applications will be evaluated by a committee for selection on the basis of *quality, comprehensiveness, completeness, accuracy and appropriateness* of response to the NGO, and will use the standard evaluation criteria listed below:

Criteria	Total Points (100)
Demonstrates experience (at least 2 years) and proven track record as a provider of Pre-Employment Transition Services to students with disabilities.	5
Statement of Need: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gaps in the current practices and systems serving the targeted population to be served are clearly identified.• Documentation and data substantiate the identified gaps.	10
States an understanding of the population they will serve. Will serve students with disabilities who also meet at least one of the marginalized populations identified. Identifies counties and schools with which they will partner.	10

Organizational Commitment and Capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant's commitment to the project is well-documented and possesses the organizational capacity, including necessary resources and relevant experiences working with their selected target population, to support successful implementation of this program. 	10
Program Narrative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program narrative is comprehensive and reasonable, addresses the identified needs and will contribute to the achievement of the intended benefits of the contract program. The processes for recruitment, intake, and eligibility determination are clear and well planned. Recruitment plan includes various referral sources/entry points into the program. The program services are clearly addressed in separate sections and are in accordance with Bridge Program Requirements. The participant pathway/service-flow from recruitment through placement is clearly laid out and the sequencing is easy to follow. 	20
Planned Partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes agreements with partners relevant to program implementation. Partnerships have clearly defined roles. 	10
Budget Details and Budget Narrative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project budget adheres to the described program services and the proposed expenditures are reasonably necessary for their effective implementation. 	10

**If any of the required documents are not submitted, signed and dated, your application will be considered incomplete and, therefore, may not be reviewed by the selection committee.*

I. Mandatory Technical Assistance

DVRS will provide a virtual information session / technical assistance workshop on Monday, July 7, 2025, from 1pm to 2:30pm and Thursday, July 10, 2025, from 1pm to 2:30pm via Microsoft TEAMS. Invites will be sent to the emails provided in the applicant's letter of intent. **Attendance is mandatory for applicants to be considered eligible to apply.** Applicants planning to attend the workshop must submit letters of intent, as described in section G, to DVRSPreETS@dol.nj.gov by 12:00 p.m. Monday, July 7, 2025.

J. APPLICATION SUBMITTAL PROCESS

Applications must be received by DVRS via IGX **by 12:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 22, 2025**. DVRS will not accept any application received after the submittal deadline. Responsibility for timely submission is the sole responsibility of the applicant.

All inquiries regarding the application process should be directed to the DVRS Programs Unit via email to DVRSPreETS@dol.nj.gov.

K. AWARD PROCESS

All applications are subject to panel review, pre-contract revisions, and approval by the NJDOL Commissioner. Final amounts will be determined at the time of pre-contract revisions and are subject to the availability of funds.

DVRS reserves the right to reject any and all applications when circumstances indicate that it is in its best interest to do so. DVRS's best interests in this context include, but are not limited to, loss of funding; the inability of the applicant to provide adequate services and indication of misrepresentation of information.