**DRAFT**

**TWO PART COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT ENGAGEMENT**

**AND CONFERENCE PROPOSAL (Anticipated Budget: up to $12,000)**

**Overview of Proposal**

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) is interested in engaging the I/DD community and stakeholders (including K-12 school personnel, e.g. school transition coordinators and exceptional student staff) in dialogue and visioning for North Carolina’s transition to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) from Adult Vocational Development Programs (ADVPs). The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced in January 2022 that it had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Disability Rights North Carolina (DRNC) and the Center for Public Representation (CPR) to make this transition. There are significant questions in the I/DD community about these changes.

North Carolina is also an Employment First state but there is still a very high unemployment rate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Significant infrastructure and supports are needed for CIE and Employment First to be successful.

In this proposal, NCCDD would engage a trusted 3rd party organization to undertake a three-step iterative process for community and stakeholder engagement, dialogue, education, and visioning. These three steps would be as follows:

* Individual and Small Group Interviews and Focus Groups
* Virtual Townhall(s) Organized and Hosted by NCCDD and Potentially Facilitated by the 3rd Party
* A Spring 2023 Conference on Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina

This process would be conducted through two consecutive contracts. The first contract would take place from approximately June 1, 2022 through September 15, 2022. It would consist of the individual and small group interviews and focus groups. It would also consist of two (2) or more virtual townhalls for individuals with I/DD and family members organized by and held by the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities. It may include a presentation by DHHS and opportunities for individuals with I/DD and family members to ask questions and engage in dialogue with DHHS leaders. It will also include successful models from other states or from communities in North Carolina that have made this transition. Such dialogue may be facilitated by the trusted third-party organization. The virtual townhalls may also include a presentation by DRNC and it may include an opportunity for questions and dialogue with Employment Providers, LME/MCOs, and/or ADVPs as it is organized. The virtual townhalls may also include a benefits counselor to answer questions families and stakeholders may have regarding the impact of CIE on current benefits.

The third-party organization would develop a brief white paper or presentation with summaries of perspectives learned through this process and recommendations would be developed as a result of the interviews, focus groups, and townhalls.

The second contract would be from approximately September 16, 2022 through April 30, 2023. The purpose of the second contract would be to use the information, resources, and relationships gathered in the first contract to organize and host a Spring 2023 Conference on Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina. The parameters of the second contract would be developed in the summer of 2022.

**Individual and Small Group Interviews and Focus Groups**

As NCCDD began discussing the need for a potential conference on Competitive Integrated Employment, the suggestion was made to do significant pre-conference work to enable individuals and small groups to discuss their hopes, concerns, and questions for this transition in safe smaller settings to be able to prepare for larger group gatherings. This is because there are many different stakeholders with diverse and divergent perspectives. These stakeholders include:

* Individuals with I/DD in ADVPs
* Individuals with I/DD not in ADVPs
* Family members of individuals with I/DD in ADVPs
* Family members of individuals with I/DD not in ADVPs
* I/DD Advocacy Organizations
* ADVPs
* Employment Providers
* Employers
* DHHS
* General Assembly Members
* Employment Organizations
* LME/MCOs
* I/DD Providers and Advocates/Legislative Advocates
* Out of State Leaders and/or Providers who Have Successfully Made this Transition
* Benefits Specialists

While it may not be possible to engage all of these individuals and stakeholders, it would be important to engage a cross-section in individual interviews and focus groups in order to explore and understand the different perspectives, concerns, and hopes. NCCDD would work with the trusted third party and other I/DD stakeholders to identify potential interviewees and focus group members.

**Two Virtual Town Halls Organized by NCCDD**

NCCDD would also work with DHHS and the trusted third party to organize two virtual townhalls in August or early September 2022 to discuss the transition to Competitive Integrated Employment. As stated earlier, the townhalls would provide DHHS with an opportunity to educate individuals, families, and stakeholders. It would also provide time for facilitated questions and comments and give DHHS the opportunity to potentially consider feedback. This could be facilitated by NCCDD or the trusted third party.

**White Paper**

Finally, the trusted third party would write a brief white paper for NCCDD and the I/DD community to provide its findings from the interviews, focus groups, and townhalls. It would provide recommendations for development of a Spring Conference to further explore this transition.

**Spring 2023 Conference on Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina**

Through a second contract to be developed during the summer of 2022, NCCDD would work with the trusted third party to prepare for a Spring Conference on Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina. The parties would work in partnership to develop the agenda for the conference, the deliverables for the conference, conference speakers and presentations, and marketing to the I/DD community and stakeholders. The parties may also decide whether to continue some of the interviews, focus groups and virtual townhalls during the second contract as well.