

**COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE PROPOSAL (Anticipated Budget:
up to \$45,000)**

Introduction

This is a proposal for the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) to develop a sole source contract for up to \$45,000 for a Competitive Integrated Employment Conference with the i2i Center for Integrative Health. The conference would be the next phase in work i2i has done for NCCDD to engage the varied stakeholders who will be necessary for North Carolina to successfully transition to Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) in North Carolina. The conference and the work related to it would take place by November 30, 2023. The conference will follow work that i2i previously did for the Council in 2022 when it engaged all of the stakeholders in discussions for how North Carolina can transition to CIE. NCCDD would negotiate the contract deliverables and budget with i2i and seek approval of the deliverables and budget from the NCCDD Executive Committee prior to the execution of a contract.

Overview of Proposal

NCCDD is interested in hosting a Competitive, Integrated Employment Conference to continue to engage the I/DD community, providers, employers, and stakeholders in dialogue and visioning for North Carolina's transition to CIE from Adult Vocational Development Programs (ADVPs) and sheltered workshops. The Conference would include speakers, topics, and technical assistance of import to the CIE transition. These topics/speakers may include:

- providers and employers who have successfully transitioned to CIE from less competitive integrated settings;
- benefits and employment;
- funding sources for the transition;
- the recent federal CIE grant obtained by North Carolina; and
- the importance of transitioning to CIE and the national and local policies and steps for such transition.

North Carolina has a need for a CIE conference for the following reasons:

- 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 coordinate, arrange and facilitate a 2023 Conference on Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina. It would also work with NCCDD to determine whether the conference would be in-person, virtual, or hybrid, secure any location, secure speakers, and support conference registration.

This conference would follow the CIE Engagement that i2i Integrated Health completed in 2022, which included the following:

- Fifteen in-depth interviews with the varied stakeholders that represented the span of perspectives interested in Competitive Integrated Employment in North Carolina. Interviewees represented perspectives as individual service-users, family members, providers of ADVP and other pertinent services and their professional organizations, LME/MCOs and State leaders.
- A virtual information session to level the knowledge about CIE was held on November 7th, 2022. The information session produced excellent dialog and a variety of perspectives about NC's transition to CIE.
- A December 2022 Report entitled "North Carolina Transition to Competitive Integrated Employment Valuing All Perspectives."

The purpose of the proposal is to have a trusted 3rd party contractor, who has trusted and deep relationships with the varied stakeholders, to use information gathered from the CIE engagement activities to design and carry out a conference in 2023 to help individuals with I/DD, their families, and providers make a smooth transition to CIE. The third-party contractor and the NCCDD 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.

Sole Source Funding with i2i

NCCDD's Sole Source Funding Policy states that the following factors should be considered in determining whether to pursue sole source funding:

Key Factors

- NCCDD staff have screened request to determine status and referred it to the appropriate committee.
- Committee has received information in advance.
- Primary population targeted meets federal Developmental Disability definition
- Activity is responsive to goals and objectives in the State Plan or Council elects to modify Plan.
- Activity differs significantly from those funded under request for application (RFA).
- Staff capacity is adequate to provide oversight and management of sole source activity.
- Only one (1) bona fide source of the service exists.
- Organization or agency is uniquely familiar with the service or activity to be evaluated.
- Need is such that a particular individual, agency or organizations skills, abilities, and experience make the entity uniquely qualified to fulfill the need.
- RFA was issued, but no satisfactory applications were received.
- Emergency or immediate action is necessary to achieve desired outcome in desired timeframe.
- Service(s) are necessary to complete a previously funded, on-going activity.
- Where Council elects to provide funds contingent on applicant/contractor's receipt of other non-federal funds.
- Enhances ADD Network collaboration.
- Other factors specific to circumstances.

Funding decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, with strong preference given to committee review and full Council approval.

In this case, i2i is unique in its ability engage and convene the varied I/DD stakeholders to move CIE forward in North Carolina. While there is a common interest in employers, advocates, self-advocates, and the state to transition to CIE, there are significant disagreements in how CIE will move forward. This has included concerns raised by Disability Rights North Carolina, DHHS, employers, and the General Assembly on the steps necessary to move CIE forward. i2i has a long history of convening North Carolina DHHS, advocates, self-advocates, providers, LME/MCOs, and employers on difficult issues that impact and sometimes divide the I/DD community. It hosts a summer and winter conference each year that brings together the varied stakeholders. Its conferences are unique in the nation in their ability to bring together the state agency, service providers, advocates, and self-advocates while serving as an objective third party. Additionally, i2i completed the CIE Engagement contract for the Council in December 2022. The CIE Engagement activities consisted of interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders in the I/DD community that included DHHS leadership, individuals with I/DD and family members, employment providers, LME/MCOs, and/or ADVPs.