

## **Grant Program Announcement: Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind**

Related to the Service Delivery, Technical Assistance, and Professional Development of Educational Teams, Families, and Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind. This announcement provides potential applicants detailed requirements, timelines, and processes for submitting an application for this grant. All applications will be submitted in the Grants Management System (GMS). Directions for accessing GMS can be found at the end of this document.

### **Purpose**

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or agencies (grantee) to improve local educational team's capacities to implement research-based interventions and current best practices in the field of education. Grantee will provide services to individual students aged 3-22 and their educational teams, provide professional development training and consultation to educators and professionals in the field, and work in collaboration with other statewide consultants as appropriate.

### **Funding Source**

Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Hearing Impaired) – 16 V.S.A. § 2967(b)(2) These funds support consultation and services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Regionally assigned consultants assist school staff and parents in arranging for assistive technology, accommodations, training and technical assistance.

Grant amount (pending budget passage) is \$1,045,716.00.

### **Process Timeline**

Projected date for accessing GMS is June 15, 2022

Proposals due: June 24, 2022

Estimated project start: July 1, 2022

### **Form of Grant**

The grant between AOE and the selected bidder(s) will be required to be in the form of the Standard Vermont State Grant, including but not limited to standard provisions. Please note the minimum insurance requirements, although for sole proprietors, AOE has discretion to accept proof of individual automotive insurance in lieu of the usual State Grant's requirements for auto insurance.

### **Scope of Work**

Grantee will provide the following services statewide to children ages 3-22, who are enrolled in Vermont schools and to the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) who educate children and youth

### **Contact Information**

Questions about this program announcement should be sent to

[aoe.sssdivisionleadsteam@vermont.gov](mailto:aoe.sssdivisionleadsteam@vermont.gov), Attn: Chris Case, Director of Student Support Services

with IEPs and 504 Plans with a disability identified as Deafness, Hard of Hearing, Hearing Impairment, and/or Deaf-Blindness:

1. Consultation to schools and families to facilitate access to classroom curriculum and instruction, including accommodations and modifications for student access and/or to the learning environment.
2. Consultation to schools and families to assist with child-specific amplification systems, audiological support specific to FM loop systems; student/family audiology services support, and pre/post Cochlear Implant Evaluations.
3. Direct instruction with or services to students, including improving language acquisition, listening and/or speaking, as outlined in an IEP or 504 Plan;
4. In-service training to school teams regarding:
  - a. Individual students and
  - b. General information for schools regarding hearing, hearing loss, and noise in the environment
5. Demonstrate knowledge of evidence-based practices for this population which reflects a current review of research.
6. Collect data on student needs and services using the [NASDSE guidelines](#) for performance indicators and standards. Collect and analyze feedback on individual technical assistance and trainings that are presented throughout the year, as well as other feedback on other rendered services. Report this information annually to the AOE by June 30, 2023.
7. Convene or maintain a “Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deaf-Blindness Provider Workgroup” comprised of fellow providers of deaf services (including but not limited to teachers of the deaf, audiologists, early intervention etc.). Hold bi-monthly (every other month) meetings, in coordination with AOE, to discuss statewide procedures, statewide initiatives, unmet needs etc. The selected applicant will work collaboratively with other vendors providing service to D/HH/DB children statewide and the selected applicant work collaboratively with the DHHDB Council through active participation at Council and subcommittee meetings.

### **Services (as appropriate) for Inclusion of Grantee Proposed Service Delivery Model**

**Referrals** – New referrals are initiated with a student observation(s) and report to school team/staff. Based on the observation(s), recommendations are made regarding required or necessary services in order for the student to participate in the general education classroom.

**Consultation Services** – Consultant services are based on student needs and articulated in the student’s Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan; technical assistance and resources to the in-place educator; staff and/or peer in-service; observation with follow up contact with staff and/or student, audiological support specific to FM loop systems; other specialized equipment; academic content accommodations, and student/family audiology services support. Consultants assist school staff and parents in arranging for assistive technology, accommodations, training and technical assistance. Services should include a description of how they consult on students transitioning for life beyond high school in terms of independent living, life and technical skills, and post-secondary options.

**Comprehensive Speech and Language Evaluations** – Speech and Language Pathologists provide comprehensive assessment of speech, language, vocabulary and auditory skill development for Initial and Three-Year Evaluations, and pre/post Cochlear Implant Evaluations.

**Audiological Evaluations-** Audiologists provide comprehensive assessment to determine type, degree, and configuration of hearing loss.

**Annual Monitoring** – Student is monitored by consultant via distance technology or email with school staff to check on status/progress and provide recommendations/ technical assistance.

**Summer Services (as appropriate)** are contracted on an individual basis for additional fees and reflect the consultant’s time for direct service (including home visit and preparation time) portal to portal and mileage.

**Residential/Day Program Consultation** – Consultant visits residential program for observation, IEP meetings, etc.

**Sign Language Instruction** – Instruction in American Sign Language or other visual representation of language to promote language acquisition and communication development and/or to support listening skills and augment communication as speech skills are developing. Individual instructional sessions are available for students, as well as staff training and group instruction with peers. The consultant can assist with service coordination.

**Direct Services** – Services may include direct services on site to provide continuous *direct* instructional service based on needs of a student who is Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and/or Hard of Hearing as written within an IEP or 504 Plan.

## **General Requirements**

1. Services are provided by licensed educators and related service providers, as well as qualified providers such as VT licensed Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, VT licensed audiologists, VT licensed Speech language pathologists, and ASL interpreters or Communication Facilitators. with appropriate credentials to demonstrate proficiency. Professionals need to be qualified as proven by having the training and experience to work with children who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing.
2. Must have knowledge related to the population served and in areas of collaborative teamwork, creative problem-solving, inclusive education to improve access to general education curriculum, distance-based consultation, systematic instruction, adult learning, assistive technology, related services cross-disciplinary, interagency resources and VT Multi-Tiered System of Supports (VTmtss) Field Guide and the components of the implementation of an effective MTSS framework within a K-12 school environment.
3. Support practices that promote universal design for learning, differentiation, and the inclusion of all students in the general education curriculum and classroom.
4. Coach and facilitate the collection, analysis and skillful use of data to inform decision-making on instructional practices and resource allocation at the student, class, and grade level in the targeted school and supervisory union/supervisory district levels.

5. Remain current in recommended practices for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and be able to support teams in the implementation of these practices by providing technical assistance, training, and teaching to adults.
6. Demonstrate understanding and application of [NASDSE Guidelines](#) as part of program design and formative/summative evaluation of program implementation.
7. Coordinate with the AOE to host virtual and live events, newsletters and social media opportunities that highlights products for students who are deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing.

## **Applicant General Requirements**

Applicants must have the expertise and structure necessary to provide the above-mentioned services and proposals should clearly provide evidence of those capabilities for each service included in their proposal. Applicants shall demonstrate ways they will work with existing programs to provide wider access to services for persons with deafness, hearing loss or deaf-blindness. Applicants shall demonstrate competency in the area of the Deaf culture. Applicants should describe service areas, particularly the method and means by which they intend to bring services to rural Vermonters.

Agencies wishing to provide a portion of services will need to demonstrate collaborations with other agencies to indicate the ability to easily provide all required RFP services to individuals across regions. Describe how the agency will partner to provide direct and/or consultive services to Vermonters. This demonstration should be in the form of letters from other agencies or by memorandum of understanding letters (MOUs).

Applicants must have community partners that are committed to providing high quality services. Matching resources are not required but are encouraged to strengthen an application. If funds offered are not sufficient to sustain a comprehensive program, then applicants should outline a plan to secure additional resources.

Program income can be generated through services provided; however, the income must be used for the operation of the program. The goal is for individuals to have seamless service delivery of program offerings. Grantees should explain how this will be achieved, with an emphasis on collaborative partnerships with entities to ensure all services within this RFP are addressed.

In addition, applicants need to describe how the community will continue to have access to services if your agency or collaborative partners experience unforeseen challenges. Applicants will need to describe their staff's level of cultural competency when it comes to the Deaf culture, including staff's proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL), their experience advocating within hearing culture and their skill in written English.

## **Organizational Summary**

Prepare a summary outlining the planned service delivery model that includes methods for providing the required services to persons who are Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-blind. Summary should validate the organization's capability to perform the proposed services and include the following information (5-pages maximum):

Description of experience and familiarity with current best practice and evidence-based resources (including but not limited to; collaborative teamwork, creative problem-solving, inclusive education to improve access to general education curriculum, distance-based consultation, systematic instruction, adult learning, assistive technology, related services cross-disciplinary, interagency resources, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Positive Behavior Interventions Support),

- Description of experience providing professional development and technical assistance related to current best practice and evidence-based practices to educators including Supervisory Union/District leadership teams as well experience providing direct services to children who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind,
- An organizational chart as well as the names of current Board of Directors and affiliates,
- A list of the professional staff and qualifications. Include description for each staff position working on this project. If deaf staff will be hired, describe how their communication with the hearing community will be facilitated (i.e., a staff or contract interpreter). If hearing staff will be hired, describe the requirement for the position's ASL skill level. Include descriptions of technical abilities using appropriate technology for, at minimum, data collection and analysis, service delivery, effective technical assistance, professional development, instructional coaching facilitation, and communication skills.
- A description of the facilities where services will be provided that addresses potential barriers and accommodations to ensure facilities are fully accessible to people with disabilities.
- A description of accommodations that will be made for deaf, deaf-blind, blind or non-English speaking consumers.
- Description of knowledge and application of federal regulations of IDEA, State Rules, and the Standards for the delivery of services and process, best inclusionary practices that align with the general curriculum in the regular education environment, data collection and analysis, instructional coaching and ability to conduct a multitude of professional development activities to accomplish the Scope of Work.

### **Service Delivery Model**

1. Describe a service delivery model that accurately and concisely reflects the General Requirements as well as the Scope of Work described above. Applicants are strongly encouraged to reflect NASDSE standards as appropriate within their design. In addition, the model should describe the objectives of all services, approaches to be used, proposed number of persons to be reached, and the general outcomes expected. The Model should include an implementation plan with detailed timeline and milestones or benchmarks and the individuals responsible to carry out the activities in accordance with the Scope of Work set forth in the RFP. The Model includes specific outreach strategies to ethnic minorities and those living at or below poverty level as well as the method and means for bringing services to rural Vermonters. Agencies wishing to provide a portion of services will need to demonstrate collaborations with other agencies to indicate the ability to easily serve individuals within their regions. Partnerships may include cooperating public and private agencies, commercial or industrial entities, institutions of higher education, and others. It also may include individuals such as consultants or groups of



individuals that advise or help determine policy. Evidence of the collaboration could be in the form of letters of support from other agencies and/or proposed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) (5-pages maximum, 30 points).

### **Service Description: Direct and Consultative Services**

2. Demonstrate the ways in which continuous *direct* needs-based instructional services will be provided to students who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and/or Hard of Hearing as written within an IEP or 504 Plan. Description should include how these services will be used to increase language and communication competencies. Applicants should describe the target populations with whom they will be working. The service description will describe the ability and proposed methods to provide and carry out consultation to school systems and includes the method and means by which they intend to bring services to rural Vermonters. Provide details around how direct services as well as training and technical assistance will be tracked and evaluated. The service description must also include the plan for establishing and collecting performance measures and associated data (Not to exceed 4 pages, 25 points).

### **Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation**

3. Identify the specific need(s), which the proposed project is intended to meet and indicate why the project requires support. State the general goals and specific objectives of the project and show how the proposed project relates to the priorities of this RFP and the needs of the geographic area to be served. Indicate the potential target or client population to be served. Objectives of the project should be clearly defined and measurable. Identify the community and individual impacts that can be expected by the services provided. Show how services will enhance the quality of life and community inclusion of people with communication disabilities. All applications must include a plan for service evaluation (consultation, technical assistance, direct services), which is based on an objective and quantifiable methodology to evaluate progress toward, and achievement of, service objectives. Describe how data will be maintained on the number, type and duration of services provided to all entities. Describe how the agency will document the impacts of the services provided and how changes will be made to service delivery based on the data collected. Describe what data will be collected, how it will be analyzed in light of objectives, including consumer satisfaction data. For all services, data must be maintained on the number, type and duration of services provided to all entities and must document the impacts of the services provided. Applicants are strongly encouraged to reflect NASDSE standards in outlining the data, evaluation, and outcome requirements described within this section. Identified AOE personnel will work with awarded grantees in outlining the data and outcome requirements utilizing the [NASDSE](#) standards for effective programs. Monthly/quarterly reports will be developed and provided to the AOE program manager based on the agreed outcomes of the grant award. (Not to exceed 4 pages, 20 points).

### **Budget Narrative**

4. Describe the cost effectiveness and plan for sustainability by responding to the following (Not to exceed 2 pages, 25 points):

- Describe how awarded funds will be utilized to provide services in the most cost-effective manner. Include specific plans to capture non-state revenues and how other funds will be leveraged to be utilized in providing required services.
- Describe the methodology for determining cost allocations to each program and the portion of the cost which benefits the program.
- Describe additional resources which are secured, pending, and requested. Identify specific contributions to the project by the applicant and any collaborating organizations including in-kind contributions, cost sharing, donations, etc. In addition, describe yours and your collaborative partners' sustainability plan, i.e., utilization of their current strategic plans. Please include any transition planning for the end of the grant award.

### **Bidder Selection Process**

A review panel will evaluate and score proposals on their merits using the criteria and score points below.

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
<p><b>Organizational Summary</b></p> <p>Organizational Summary that outlines the planned service delivery model, includes methods for providing the required services to persons who are Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-blind. Summary should validate the organization's capability to perform the proposed services.</p>	Yes/No
<p><b>Service Delivery Model</b></p> <p>Service delivery model that accurately and concisely reflects the General Requirements and Scope of Work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the objectives of all services, approaches to be used, proposed number of persons to be reached, and the general outcomes expected.</li> <li>• Includes specific outreach strategies to ethnic minorities and those living at or below poverty level as well as the method and means for bringing services to rural Vermonters.</li> <li>• Includes evidence of the collaboration if appropriate (letters of support from other agencies and/or proposed memoranda of understanding (MOUs).</li> </ul>	30
<p><b>Consultation and Direct Services</b></p> <p>Demonstrate the ways in which direct services will be provided to individuals, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How these services will be used to increase language and communication competencies.</li> <li>• A description of the target populations with whom they will be working.</li> <li>• Methods to provide and carry out consultation, training, and technical assistance to school systems.</li> </ul>	25

CRITERIA	POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details around how direct services as well as training and technical assistance will be tracked and evaluated.</li> <li>• Plan for establishing and collecting performance measures and associated data.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation</b></p> <p>Describe the evaluation plan for consultations, technical assistance, and direct services which is based on an objective and quantifiable methodology to evaluate progress toward, and achievement of service objectives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlines evaluation plan with measurable goals and objectives.</li> <li>• How data will be maintained on the number, type and duration of services provided to all entities including, but not limited to individuals with disabilities, minority groups, employers, public agencies, and others</li> <li>• Show how services will enhance the quality of life and community inclusion of people with communication disabilities</li> <li>• Demonstrated knowledge and application of federal regulations of IDEA, 504, State Rules, and the Standards as applied to evaluation plan and sources of evidence that demonstrate the merit and worth of the model implementation.</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Budget Narrative</b></p> <p>Budget narrative identifies how funds will be utilized to provide services in a cost-effective manner, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific plans to capture and leverage non-state revenues to provide required services</li> <li>• Methodology for determining cost allocations to each program and the portion of the cost which benefits the program</li> <li>• Additional resources which are secured, pending and requested such as in-kind contributions, cost sharing, donations</li> <li>• All sustainability plans, i.e., utilization of current strategic plans as well as any transition planning for the end of the grant award</li> </ul>	25

**Accessing Grants Management System**

If you are interested in submitting an application, please complete this [brief web form](#).

Entities must be current members of State of Vermont’s Vision Vendor System. If you are unsure of your status, contact Meg Porcella at [AOE.SSSDivisionLeadsTeam@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.SSSDivisionLeadsTeam@vermont.gov).

To obtain a Vision Vendor number, email the following to Meg Porcella at [AOE.SSSDivisionLeadsTeam@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.SSSDivisionLeadsTeam@vermont.gov):

1. Verification of [SAM.gov](#) registration:



- a. Search for your status on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) and save the PDF of your active registration.
  - b. To register your entity on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), follow the instructions on the SAM.gov homepage to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)-formerly a DUNS number-and complete the registration process (Note: this process may take several weeks to complete).
2. The month in which your fiscal year begins
  3. An updated [W9](#)
    - a. Typewritten
    - b. Signed in blue or black ink
    - c. Dated within the past 6 months