



**STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)  
RFA NO. 27-47YLP-000**

**NOTE:** Please read this entire document before submitting a response. Responses that do not meet one or more requirement stated herein may be disqualified and not scored.

**Office of Homeless Youth  
Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, Youth Lead Project**

**RESPONSE DUE DATE:** Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 5:00pm PST

**EXPECTED TIME PERIOD FOR CONTRACT:** November 1, 2026 – October 31, 2027

RFA COORDINATOR: Emily Abell, [YouthHomeless@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:YouthHomeless@commerce.wa.gov)  
Please use "Youth Lead Project" as the subject line in any email correspondence.

All current documents related to this RFA, including the application, exhibits, a schedule of activities, Questions and Answers, and any amendments, are available online at [YHDP Youth Lead Project RFA \(Box\)](#).

**CONTRACTOR ELIGIBILITY:** This procurement is open to those entities which satisfy the [minimum qualifications](#) stated herein and are available for work in Washington.

**FUNDING SOURCE AND METHOD:** This grant includes both federal and state funding. Payments will be made on a **reimbursement basis** for deliverables accepted and/or allowable time and expenses.

**CONTENTS OF THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS:**

1. Introduction
2. General Information
3. Application Contents
4. Evaluation and Award
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**RFA Exhibits:**

- Exhibit A: [Certifications and Assurances \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
- Exhibit B: [Applicant Information \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - [Narrative Questions \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - [Budget Proposal \(Smartsheet form\)](#), includes uploading a completed [Youth Lead Project - Budget Proposal Template FY27 \(Excel\)](#)
- Exhibit C: [Diverse Business Inclusion Plan \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
- Exhibit D: [Workers' Rights Certification \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
- Exhibit E: Example [Grant Contract including General Terms and Conditions \(PDF\)](#), includes example Youth Lead Project Scope of Work and [Youth Lead Project – OHY Program Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Washington State Department of Commerce hereafter called "COMMERCE," is initiating this Request for Applications (RFA) from those qualified and interested in grant funding for the Office of Homeless Youth's (OHY) Youth Lead Project. COMMERCE is a recipient of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Youth Homeless Demonstration Program (YHDP) renewed awards totaling \$626,634.

This funding is to be used for Supportive Services Only (SSO) projects to provide interventions that prevent and end youth homelessness in Washington's Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care (CoC). See [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program \(YHDP\) – Washington State Department of Commerce](#) for more information on BoS YHDP. The Office of Homeless Youth may also award up to \$148,644 in state funds to support additional needs of the project.

The Washington BoS CoC is working to impact four core outcomes identified by the [United States Interagency Council on Homelessness](#): 1) stable housing; 2) permanent connections; 3) education and employment; and 4) social-emotional well-being. The BoS YHDP draft Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) focuses on collaboratively designing a system that will:

- Identify and engage youth and young adults at risk of and experiencing homelessness
- Minimize the inflow into the homeless system by intervening to prevent the loss of housing and diverting youth from the homeless system back to family and natural supports whenever possible
- Provide immediate access to low-barrier shelter and crisis services
- Deliver effective housing assistance and services without preconditions that create sustainable solutions and avert cycles of recurring homelessness

The Youth Lead Project was developed by the BoS YHDP Youth Action Board, known as the Youth for Youth (Y4Y) Board, to support professional opportunities for young adults with lived experience of homelessness that address youth homelessness through both direct service delivery activities, like street outreach and case management, and leadership and decision-making activities in local and statewide system change. Also see [Youth Lead Project - OHY Program Guidelines \(PDF\)](#) included in Exhibit E.

### 1.2 OBJECTIVES

- COMMERCE may award 5-9 contracts as a result of this RFA.
- Collectively, Youth Lead Project grants must provide outreach and/or case management services to a minimum of 76 eligible youth and young adults in Washington's Balance of State Continuum of Care. Individuals must be ages 12-24 and meet criteria for category 1, 2, or 4 of the [HUD definition of homelessness](#) at intake to be eligible for enrollment in the project.
- Youth Program Specialists with lived experience of homelessness will participate in youth homelessness system improvement activities as part of their Youth Lead Project grant-funded position to ensure youth voice is represented and reflected in grantee, community, and state policy and practices.

### 1.3 MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum qualifications include:

- Licensed to do business in Washington or submit a statement of commitment that it will become licensed in Washington within thirty (30) calendar days of being selected as the Apparently Successful Applicant.

- Able to provide outreach and/or case management services to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in one or more of the 34 Balance of State (BoS) counties (Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish and Spokane counties are **not** part of the BoS).

Applications which do not clearly meet or exceed these minimum qualifications will be rejected as non-responsive and will not receive further consideration. Any Application that is rejected as non-responsive will not be evaluated or scored.

#### **1.4 FUNDING**

Applications in excess of \$160,000 will be rejected as non-responsive and will not be evaluated. In the event additional funding becomes available, any contract awarded may be amended to provide for additional related services. Additional funding is not guaranteed.

Any contract(s) awarded as a result of this RFA is contingent upon the availability of funding.

#### **1.5 PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE**

The period of performance of any contract(s) resulting from this RFA is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about **November 1, 2026** and to end on **October 31, 2027**. COMMERCE reserves the option at its sole discretion to extend the contract for two additional one-year periods and increase funding as outlined in 1.4. Successful projects will be eligible for renewal on an annual basis as part of the annual HUD CoC Competitive process.

#### **1.6 AWARD PRIORITIES**

##### Geographic Distribution

Reviewers seek to address geographic disparities by prioritizing funding so that communities have a robust continuum of care for adequately addressing the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. We want to ensure youth and families who request help receive the services they need such that no youth is turned away due to a community's inability or lack of capacity to respond with appropriate resources. Youth in crisis should not have to leave their existing community or support system in order to find safe and stable housing.

##### Equity in Services

Youth of color and LGBTQIA2S+ youth are overrepresented among homeless youth, compared to the general population, because of structural racism, trauma and abuse, family rejection, and poverty. Reviewers will prioritize funding requests from organizations that demonstrate they can adequately address the unique needs of these overrepresented populations, remove barriers, and provide services that are affirming, accessible, and responsive to youth who are marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Grantees will be required to utilize emerging research and best practices for addressing the needs of these communities.

##### Youth Engagement and Voice

It is important that young people have a genuine voice in the services that are being delivered. When young people are included as decision makers, the organizations that serve them are better informed and equipped to meet their complex and unique needs. Furthermore, young people who feel valued are more likely to be invested in and increasingly take on leadership roles. Leadership opportunities empower young people and propel them towards successful outcomes. Reviewers are interested in supporting services that return power to young people, actively cultivate ways for youth to be involved, provide feedback, and take on leadership opportunities at every level of an organization.

#### **1.7 CONTRACTING WITH CURRENT OR FORMER STATE EMPLOYEES**

Specific restrictions apply to contracting with current or former state employees pursuant to chapter 42.52 of the Revised Code of Washington. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the requirements prior to submitting a proposal that includes current or former state employees.

## 1.8 DEFINITIONS

Definitions for the purposes of this RFA include:

**Apparent Successful Applicant/Bidder/Vendor/Grantee/Awardee:** The Applicant(s) selected to enter into negotiations leading to a fully executed contract for the work described in this procurement document.

**Applicant:** Individual, company, organization, or firm submitting an Application in order to attain a contract with COMMERCE.

**Application:** A complete, formal offer submitted in response to this RFA. The Application consists of Smartsheet forms labeled Exhibits A-D. Exhibit B consists of three forms (Applicant Information, Narrative Questions, and Budget Proposal).

**COMMERCE:** The Department of Commerce is the agency of the state of Washington that is issuing this RFA.

**Contract:** A written, legally binding agreement to perform the services proposed, also called a Grant or Interagency Agreement.

**Applicant or Grantee:** Individual or organization whose Application has been accepted by COMMERCE and is awarded a fully executed, written contract.

**Exhibit:** Document attached to this RFA, also referred to as Attachment.

**Request for Applications (RFA):** Formal procurement document in which needed services are identified and entities are invited to submit their Application to provide those services; this procurement document.

## 1.9 ADA

COMMERCE complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Applicants may contact the RFA Coordinator to receive this Request for Qualifications and Quotations in Braille or on tape.

## 2 GENERAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 RFA COORDINATOR

The RFA Coordinator is the sole point of contact in COMMERCE for this RFA. All communication between Applicants and COMMERCE upon release of this RFA shall be with the RFA Coordinator, as follows:

Name	Emily Abell
E-Mail Address	<a href="mailto:YouthHomeless@commerce.wa.gov">YouthHomeless@commerce.wa.gov</a>
E-Mail Subject	Youth Lead Project

Any other communication will be considered unofficial and non-binding on COMMERCE. Applicants are to rely on written statements issued by the RFA Coordinator. **Communication directed to parties other than the RFA Coordinator may result in disqualification.**

## 2.2 ESTIMATED SCHEDULE OF PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES

Issue Request for Applications	Tuesday, June 23, 2026
Applicants' Conference	Tuesday, June 30, 2026, at 2pm PST, <a href="#">Meeting Registration - Zoom</a>
Question & answer period	June 23 – August 4, 2026
Answers issued no later than	Friday, August 7, 2026
<b>Applications due</b>	<b>Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 5pm PST</b>
Evaluation	August 19 – September 16, 2026
Conduct virtual presentations with finalists, if required	TBD
Announce "Apparent Successful Applicant" and send notification via e-mail to unsuccessful Applicants	Tuesday, September 22, 2026
Hold debriefing conferences (if requested)	September 23 – October 6, 2026
Negotiate contract	September 23 – October 31, 2026
Earliest date contract may be signed	October 7, 2026

**COMMERCE reserves the right to revise the above schedule.**

## 2.3 APPLICANTS' CONFERENCE

A conference will be held on *Tuesday, June 30, 2026, at 2:00p.m., Pacific time*. The conference will be virtual only, [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#). All prospective Applicants are encouraged attend; however, attendance is not mandatory. A recording of the conference will be posted online at [YHDP Youth Lead Project RFA \(Box\)](#).

COMMERCE will be bound only to COMMERCE written answers to questions. Questions arising at the Applicants' conference will be documented and answered in written form. A copy of the questions and answers will be sent to each prospective Applicant made the RFA Coordinator aware of its interest in this RFA.

## 2.4 QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

COMMERCE will accept questions about this RFA sent to the RFA Coordinator at the email address listed in Section 2.1 during this period. Questions should not identify the submitting person or organization. COMMERCE will answer all questions in a Q&A document posted no later than the date identified in Section 2.2.

## 2.5 SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

Applications must be submitted through Smartsheet forms no later than **5:00pm, Pacific Time, on Tuesday, August 18, 2026**. The Application consists of the following linked forms:

1. Exhibit A: [Certifications and Assurances \(Smartsheet form\)](#), this form must have a signature of the individual within the organization authorized to bind the organization to the offer.
2. Exhibit B: [Applicant Information \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - o [Narrative Questions \(Smartsheet form\)](#) responses are limited to 250 words each. Any additional text will be removed for scoring.
  - o [Budget Proposal \(Smartsheet form\)](#) which includes uploading a completed [Youth Lead Project - Budget Proposal Template FY27 \(Excel\)](#)
3. Exhibit C: [Diverse Business Inclusion Plan \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
4. Exhibit D: [Workers' Rights Certification \(Smartsheet form\)](#)

Smartsheet will only save responses to forms that have been submitted, it cannot be saved while in progress of completing. Smartsheet will automatically open the next form after each submission. It is not required to complete the forms in order, but applicants will only receive automated confirmation of complete application submissions if the forms are submitted in order. Applicants may also select "Send me a copy of my responses" at the end of each form to receive a record of each submission to ensure each form has been successfully submitted.

Applicants should allow sufficient time to ensure timely receipt of the Application by the RFA Coordinator. If any part of the Application is submitted with errors, a new form will be accepted if both the corrected form and an email notification of the change sent to the RFA coordinator at the email address listed in Section 2.1 are submitted prior to the deadline.

COMMERCE does not assume responsibility for problems with non-COMMERCE e-mail. If COMMERCE email or Smartsheet are not working, appropriate allowances will be made. Applications may not be transmitted using mail or facsimile transmission.

**Late Applications will not be accepted and will be automatically disqualified from further consideration, unless COMMERCE e-mail or Smartsheet is found to be at fault.** All Applications and any accompanying documentation become the property of COMMERCE and will not be returned. Any information received as a result of this RFA may be collected and considered for continuous improvement purposes.

## **2.6 PROPRIETARY INFORMATION/PUBLIC DISCLOSURE**

Applications submitted in response to this competitive procurement shall become the property of COMMERCE. All Applications received shall remain confidential until the Apparent Successful Bidder is announced; thereafter, the Applications shall be deemed public records as defined in Chapter 42.56 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

Any information in the Application that the Applicant desires to claim as proprietary and exempt from disclosure under the provisions of Chapter 42.56 RCW, or other state or federal law that provides for the nondisclosure of your document, must be clearly designated. The information must be clearly identified and the particular exemption from disclosure upon which the Applicant is making the claim must be cited. Each page containing the information claimed to be exempt from disclosure must be clearly identified by the words "Proprietary Information" printed on the lower right hand corner of the page. Marking the entire Application exempt from disclosure or as Proprietary Information will not be honored.

If a public records request is made for the information that the Applicant has marked as "Proprietary Information" COMMERCE will notify the Applicant of the request and of the date that the records will be released to the requester unless the Applicant obtains a court order enjoining that disclosure. If the Applicant fails to obtain the court order enjoining disclosure, COMMERCE will release the requested information on the date specified. If an Applicant obtains a court order from a court of competent jurisdiction enjoining disclosure pursuant to Chapter 42.56 RCW, or other state or federal law that provides for nondisclosure, COMMERCE shall maintain the confidentiality of the Applicant's information per the court order.

A charge will be made for copying and shipping, as outlined in RCW 42.56. No fee shall be charged for inspection of contract files, but twenty-four (24) hours' notice to the RFA Coordinator is required. All requests for information should be directed to the RFA Coordinator.

## **2.7 REVISIONS TO THE RFA**

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFA, addenda will be provided via e-mail to all individuals who have made the RFA Coordinator aware of their interest. Addenda is also published on Washington's Electronic Business Solution (WEBS), located at <https://fortress.wa.gov/ga/webs/>. Such addenda will also be published anywhere the RFA is posted, including on COMMERCE'S public webpage, located at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/contracting/>.

You may also send your name and e-mail address to the RFA Coordinator to request to receive any RFA addenda.

COMMERCE also reserves the right to cancel or to reissue the RFA in whole or in part, prior to execution of a contract.

## **2.8 ACCEPTANCE PERIOD**

Applications must provide 60 days for acceptance by COMMERCE from the due date for receipt of Applications.

## **2.9 COMPLAINT PROCESS**

Applicants may submit a complaint to COMMERCE based on any of following:

- a) The solicitation unnecessarily restricts competition;
- b) The solicitation evaluation or scoring process is unfair; or
- c) The solicitation requirements are inadequate or insufficient to prepare an Application.

A complaint may be submitted to COMMERCE at any time prior to 5 days before the bid response deadline. The complaint must meet the following requirements:

- a) The complaint must be in writing;
- b) The complaint must be sent to the RFA coordinator in a timely manner;
- c) The complaint should clearly articulate the basis for the complaint; and
- d) The complaint should include a proposed remedy.

The RFA coordinator will respond to the complaint in writing. The response to the complaint and any changes to the solicitation will be posted on WEBS. The Director of COMMERCE will be notified of all complaints and will be provided a copy of COMMERCE'S response. The complaint may not be raised again during the protest period. COMMERCE'S action or inaction in response to the complaint will be final. There is no appeal process.

## **2.10 RESPONSIVENESS**

All Applications will be reviewed by the RFA Coordinator to determine compliance with administrative requirements and instructions specified in this RFA. The Applicant is specifically notified that failure to comply with any part of this RFA may result in rejection of the Application as non-responsive.

Disqualified Applicants will be notified at or about the time of disqualification.

Disqualified Applicants will be informed of the reason for disqualification; this shall constitute a debriefing conference for the purposes of Section 4.7, Protest Procedure.

COMMERCE reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to waive minor administrative irregularities.

## **2.11 MOST FAVORABLE TERMS**

COMMERCE reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the Application submitted. Therefore, the Application should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms which the Applicant can propose. COMMERCE reserves the right to contact an Applicant for clarification of its Application.

The Applicant should be prepared to accept this RFA for incorporation into a contract resulting from this RFA. Contract negotiations may incorporate some, or all, of the Applicant's Application. It is understood that the Application will become a part of the official procurement file on this matter without obligation to COMMERCE.

## **2.12 CONTRACT AND GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS**

The Apparent Successful Applicant will be expected to enter into a contract which is substantially the same as the sample contract and its general terms and conditions attached as Exhibit E. In no event is an Applicant to submit its own standard contract terms and conditions in response to this solicitation. The Applicant may submit proposed edits as allowed in the Certifications and Assurances section, Exhibit A to this RFA. COMMERCE will review requested edits and accept or reject the same at its sole discretion.

## **2.13 COSTS TO PROPOSE**

COMMERCE will not be liable for any costs incurred by the Applicant in preparation of an Application submitted in response to this RFA, in conduct of a presentation, or any other activities related to responding to this RFA.

## **2.14 NO OBLIGATION TO CONTRACT**

This RFA does not obligate the state of Washington or COMMERCE to contract for services specified herein.

## **2.15 REJECTION OF RESPONSES**

COMMERCE reserves the right at its sole discretion to reject any and all Applications received without penalty and not to issue a contract as a result of this RFA.

## **2.16 COMMITMENT OF FUNDS**

The Director of COMMERCE or the Director's delegate are the only individuals who may legally commit COMMERCE to the expenditures of funds for a contract resulting from this RFA. No cost chargeable to the proposed contract may be incurred before receipt of a fully executed contract.

## **2.17 ELECTRONIC PAYMENT**

The state of Washington prefers to utilize electronic payment in its transactions. The successful Applicant must have or obtain a Statewide Vendor Number (SWV) from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to be paid by COMMERCE. For more information visit OFM at [www.ofm.wa.gov](http://www.ofm.wa.gov).

## **2.18 INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The Applicant is to furnish COMMERCE with a certificate of insurance executed by a duly authorized representative of each insurer, showing compliance with the insurance requirements set forth below if requested.

The Applicant shall, at Applicant's own expense, obtain and keep in force insurance coverage, which shall be maintained in full force and effect during the term of the contract. The Applicant shall furnish evidence in the form of a Certificate of Insurance that insurance shall be provided, and, if requested, a copy shall be forwarded to COMMERCE within fifteen (15) days of the contract effective date. Standard insurance requirements are included within the sample contract and its special terms and conditions attached as Exhibit E.

### 3 RESPONSE CONTENTS

Applications must be written in English and submitted electronically in Smartsheet forms:

1. Exhibit A: [Certifications and Assurances \(Smartsheet form\)](#).
2. Exhibit B: [Applicant Information \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - o [Narrative Questions \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - o [Budget Proposal \(Smartsheet form\)](#) which includes uploading a completed [Youth Lead Project - Budget Proposal Template FY27 \(Excel\)](#)
3. Exhibit C: [Diverse Business Inclusion Plan \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
4. Exhibit D: [Workers' Rights Certification \(Smartsheet form\)](#)

Smartsheet will only save responses to forms that have been submitted, it cannot be saved while in progress of completing. Smartsheet will automatically open the next form after each submission. It is not required to complete the forms in order, but applicants will only receive automated confirmation of complete application submissions if the forms are submitted in order. Applicants may also select "Send me a copy of my responses" at the end of each form to receive a record of each submission.

Applicants should allow sufficient time to ensure timely receipt of the Application by the RFA Coordinator. If any part of the Application is submitted with errors, a new form will be accepted if both the corrected form and an email notification of the change sent to the RFA coordinator at the email address listed in Section 2.1 are both submitted prior to the deadline.

**All items marked "mandatory" must be included as part of the Application for the Application to be considered responsive, however, these items are not scored. Items marked "scored" are those that are awarded points as part of the evaluation conducted by the evaluation team.**

#### 3.1 CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES (MANDATORY)

**The Certifications and Assurances form (Exhibit A) must be signed and dated** by a person authorized to legally bind the Applicant to a contractual relationship, e.g., the President or Executive Director if a corporation, the managing partner if a partnership, or the proprietor if a sole proprietorship. Those wishing to submit any proposed contract edits must indicate so on this form (see Section 2.12).

#### 3.2 APPLICANT INFORMATION (SCORED)

Exhibit B (consisting of three forms: Applicant Information, Narrative Questions, and Budget Proposal) must be completed in its entirety. If any question or section does not apply, please enter "N/A" or "None". Narrative questions 1-5 are limited to 250 words each. Any additional text will be removed prior to scoring.

#### 3.3 DIVERSE BUSINESS INCLUSION PLAN (MANDATORY)

The Diverse Business Inclusion Plan (Exhibit C) is a communication tool allowing Applicants to inform COMMERCE if diverse business will be involved in the contract if awarded. Participation includes directly (the Applicant) and indirectly, such as any subcontractors or subgrantees who might carry out services chargeable to the contract. In accordance with legislative findings and policies set forth in RCW 39.19, the state of Washington encourages participation in all contracts by firms certified by the office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE), set forth in RCW 43.60A.200 for firms certified by the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, and set forth in RCW 39.26.005 for firms that are Washington Small Businesses. No minimum level of minority- and women-owned business enterprise (MWBE), Washington Small Business, or Washington State certified Veteran Business participation is required as a condition for receiving an award. Any affirmative action requirements set forth in any federal rules included or referenced in the contract documents will apply.

### **3.4 WORKERS' RIGHTS CERTIFICATION (MANDATORY)**

The **Workers' Rights Certification (Exhibit D)** must be signed and dated as described in Section 3.1. Some employers require their employees to waive certain rights. While this is legally permitted, the Washington Governor's Office considers it a harmful and disfavored practice. Executive Order 18-03 requires all state agencies to award bonus points in competitive processes to increase contracting with employers that do not require their employees to sign an individual arbitration clause or waiver of collective or class action. Those Applicants which certify they do not require their employees to waive such rights as a condition of employment will receive an extra 5% of their awarded points added to their final score.

## **4 EVALUATION AND CONTRACT AWARD**

### **4.1 EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

Complete and responsive Applications will be evaluated strictly in accordance with the requirements stated in this RFA and any addenda issued. The evaluation of Applications will be accomplished by an evaluation team to be designated by COMMERCE, which will determine the ranking of the Applications.

### **4.2 CLARIFICATION OF RESPONSE**

The RFA Coordinator may contact Applicants for clarification of any portion of the Applicant's Application. Submission or alteration of any materials after the due date is prohibited.

### **4.3 EVALUATION AND SCORING**

Applications will be evaluated as pass/fail for meeting the [minimum qualifications](#).

Each of the five Narrative Questions in Exhibit B will be worth up to 10 points each. Any text beyond the 250-word limit for each Narrative Question will be removed prior to scoring.

Responses to the Budget Proposal in Exhibit B will be worth up to 10 points. Scoring will be determined based on projected costs being reasonable and appropriate in relation to the proposed services.

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements stated in this application and any revisions issued. Awards will be determined by threshold eligibility review, application score, and evaluating the proposal's alignment with funding goals and priorities described in section [Award Priorities](#) (Geographic Distribution, Equity in Services, and Youth Engagement and Voice) and [Youth Lead Project - OHY Program Guidelines \(PDF\)](#).

Additionally, those organizations which certify they do not require their employees to sign an individual arbitration clause as a condition of employment will receive an extra 5% of their awarded points added to their final score (see Exhibit D).

### **4.4 VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS MAY BE REQUIRED**

COMMERCE, at its sole discretion, may select the top-scoring Applicant(s) from the written evaluation for a virtual presentation. If so, COMMERCE will contact the top-scoring Applicant(s) to schedule a date and time to meet on a platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Commitments made by the Applicant at the virtual presentation, if any, will be considered binding.

If held, the virtual presentation shall determine the Apparent Successful Applicant(s).

### **4.5 NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANTS**

Applicants that are not selected for further negotiation or award will be notified by e-mail.

#### 4.6 DEBRIEFING OF UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Upon request, a debriefing conference will be scheduled with an unsuccessful Applicant. The request for a debriefing conference must be received by the RFA Coordinator within three (3) business days after the Notification of Unsuccessful Applicant notice is emailed to the Applicant. The debriefing must be scheduled within three (3) business days of the request.

Discussion at the debriefing conference is strictly limited to the following:

- Evaluation and scoring of that organization's Application;
- Any written comments from evaluators related to that Applicant;
- Review of their final score in comparison with the other final scores **without** identifying the other participants or reviewing their Applications.

Comparisons between proposals or evaluations of the other proposals is not allowed. Debriefing conferences may be conducted on the telephone or by other electronic means and will be scheduled for a maximum of thirty (30) minutes. COMMERCE reserves the right to end a debriefing for any reason.

#### 4.7 PROTEST PROCEDURE

This procedure is available to Applicants who submitted an Application in response to this RFA document and who have participated in a debriefing conference. Upon completing the debriefing conference, the Applicant is allowed five (5) business days to file a protest of the RFA process with the RFA Coordinator. Protests must be received by the RFA Coordinator no later than 5:00pm Pacific time on the fifth business day following the debriefing. Protests must be submitted by email. Applicants may choose to copy COMMERCE'S Central Contracts Office at [centralcontracts@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:centralcontracts@commerce.wa.gov). Do not copy any other COMMERCE staff.

Anyone protesting this procurement must follow the procedures described below. Protests that do not follow these procedures shall not be considered. This protest procedure constitutes the sole administrative remedy available under this RFA.

All protests must be in writing and signed by the protesting party or an authorized agent. The protest must state the grounds for the protest with specific facts and complete statements of the action(s) being protested. A description of the relief or corrective action being requested should also be included. All protests shall be addressed to the RFA Coordinator.

Only protests stipulating an issue of fact concerning the following subjects shall be considered:

- A matter of bias, discrimination or conflict of interest on the part of the evaluator
- Errors in computing the score
- Non-compliance with procedures described in this procurement document or current COMMERCE policy

Protests not based on procedural matters will not be considered. Protests will be rejected as without merit if they address issues such as: 1) An evaluator's professional judgment on or assessment of the quality of an Application, or 2) COMMERCE'S assessment of its own and/or other agencies' needs or requirements.

Scores received are not a valid basis of protest and will be dismissed as without merit unless included with facts supporting bias, discrimination, or conflict of interest on the part of an evaluator.

Upon receipt of a protest, a protest review will be held by COMMERCE. COMMERCE'S Chief Contracts Officer, or other employee delegated by the Director who was not involved in the award process, will consider the record and all available facts and issue a decision within ten (10) business days of receipt of the protest. If additional time is required, the protesting party will be notified of the delay.

In the event a protest may directly impact the actual interest of another Applicant, such Applicant may be given an opportunity to submit its views and any relevant information on the protest.

The final determination of the protest shall:

- Find the protest lacking in merit and uphold COMMERCE'S action, or
- Find only technical or harmless errors in COMMERCE'S acquisition process and determine COMMERCE to be in substantial compliance and reject the protest, or
- Find merit in the protest and provide COMMERCE options which may include:
  - Correct the error(s) and re-evaluate all Applications
  - Reissue the solicitation document and begin a new process
  - Make other findings and determine other courses of action as appropriate

If COMMERCE determines that the protest is without merit, COMMERCE may enter into a contract with the Apparent Successful Applicant(s). If the protest is determined to have merit, one of the options above will be taken.

## 5 RFA EXHIBITS

- Exhibit A: [Certifications and Assurances](#)
- Exhibit B: [Applicant Information \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - [Narrative Questions \(Smartsheet form\)](#)
  - [Budget Proposal \(Smartsheet form\)](#), includes uploading a completed [Youth Lead Project - Budget Proposal Template FY27 \(Excel\)](#)
- Exhibit C: [Diverse Business Inclusion Plan](#)
- Exhibit D: [Workers' Rights Certification](#)
- Exhibit E: Example [Grant Contract including General Terms and Conditions](#), includes example Youth Lead Project Scope of Work and [Youth Lead Project – OHY Program Guidelines \(PDF\)](#)