1. Can you clarify who is eligible to receive the stipend?

**ANSWER:** An eligible homeless service provider employee must meet all of the following criteria:

a. Currently works at an eligible organization and is at or below 80% of the area median income (Commerce will provide the list of eligible organizations. Contractor could verify both employment at an eligible organization AND income by collecting the homeless service provider employee pay stub/earning statement);

b. has an immediate economic need (can self-attest);

c. is an eligible homeless service provider employee on a full-time or part-time basis that works directly on-site with persons experiencing homelessness or residents of transitional or permanent supportive housing. This includes, but is not limited to, emergency shelter and transitional housing staff; street outreach workers; caseworkers; peer advisors; reception and administrative support staff; maintenance and custodial staff; and individuals providing direct services for homeless youth and young adults (can self-attest role at eligible organization). **This does not include executive and senior administrative employees of an eligible organization.**

d. An eligible homeless service provider employee who works for two or more eligible organizations may only receive a stipend for employment at one organization.

2. Can you clarify that this is only for **homeless service provider employees** and not staff who worked on providing eviction rental assistance during the pandemic?

**ANSWER:** That is correct, only homeless service providers working with people experiencing homelessness. This is clear in the authorizing legislation.

3. The budget is over $50 million dollars. Is there that much need? Will that many eligible homeless service providers apply for the stipend? Do you anticipate all of the funding being utilized?

**ANSWER:** These are federal Coronavirus Relief Funds and the budget is larger than the anticipated need. For example, Commerce estimates 2,500 people may be eligible. (This is a
rough estimate, Commerce does not know the size of the workforce per the eligibility.) If all 2,500 people receive the total allowable stipend of two $2,000 payments, that’s $10 million dollars. Even with the administrative rate and the outreach/marketing budget, we anticipate spending less than $20 million total.

4. Because these are federal dollars, should we expect to be audited?
   **ANSWER:** Yes. Both the State Auditor’s Office and the federal Office of Inspector General can audit this contract.

5. Do you suspect that there will be people who apply who aren’t eligible but are trying to fraudulently access the money? Can we add language to the stipend application that submitting false information is against the law and criminal charges can be pursued?
   **ANSWER:** Yes and yes. The contractor will need to develop procedures and policies to prevent fraudulent requests from being processed and to ensure no duplicate round 1 or round 2 payments are made. If the contractor determines a fraudulent payment has been made, they will be required to report the information to both Commerce and law enforcement.

6. Is our technical and financial ability to develop an application portal, outreach to eligible homeless service providers at eligible organizations and make the first stipend payments in October and the second payments six months later and complete all reporting by June 2023 the primary factor in awarding this contract?
   **ANSWER:** Yes, Commerce will award the contract to a vendor who can demonstrate their ability to complete the program requirements in the contract period.
   The applicant must demonstrate an ability to efficiently administer stipend payments statewide by showing successful administration of similar programs; an ability to adhere to federal tax requirements, including sending stipend recipients 1099 or other required tax forms; and an ability to track and report on demographic data of stipend recipients.

7. If an eligible homeless service provider employee does not want to submit demographic information, can we still provide the stipend?
   **ANSWER:** Yes. The contractor cannot require the applicant to submit demographic data in exchange for the stipend. Any data available, without names, must be submitted to Commerce.

Demographic data includes recipient age, gender, length of time at current agency, current salary/wage, educational attainment, race, ethnicity and geographic location. Any data collected must be submitted with each invoice.

8. Based on the phrasing in section 1.3 “The entity must demonstrate an ability to efficiently administer a statewide stipend payment program to individuals by showing at least four years of successful administration of similar programs,” I would conclude that specific statewide experience is not required and that similar experience for large private and/or public entities would suffice as “similar.”
   **ANSWER:** That is correct.

9. We have questions about the requirements for verifying "immediate economic need" and income for homeless service employees who may be eligible for stipends. Will documentation of either of these qualifying criteria be required? Or will self-reporting/self-attestation be accepted?
**ANSWER:** Applicants should be able to self-attest to having an “immediate economic need,” however, the contractor will need to verify that the applicant is at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI). Because applicants have to be working for an eligible homeless service program, we think a current pay stub/earning statement would meet that requirement.

10. Per the state budget (page 114, Line 12) is there an additional RFP or connected partnership relating to the pay-equity study?
**ANSWER:** The Workforce study and the Stipend program are in the same section of the state budget and there are two separate RFPs for this work.

11. Is the distribution of funds intended to be a reimbursement process, stipulating that the administering organization must have access to the full funding required to disburse payments?
**ANSWER:** Yes, this is a reimbursement based contract. Reimbursement requests can be submitted up to weekly if needed. We can make that adjustment in the contract terms during contract negotiation if requested.

12. The Diverse Business Inclusion Plan certification offered by OMWBE appears to only be offered to for-profit entities. We are a minority-owned and operated charitable nonprofit organization (in fact, 94% of our staff identify as BIPOC). Are there particular disclosures or third party certifications that the Department of Commerce would recommend we provide with the RFP to evidence this for Commerce’s recordkeeping (and our ability to satisfy the Diverse Business Inclusion Plan RFP requirement)?
**ANSWER:** The information required when an entity is a non-profit is as follows: Mark No for each of the check box answers. On the line note that you are nonprofit. Fill out the % information that is asked and date and sign the document. Please return the document as part of your proposal. This information is kept within the contract file for information about firms/organizations and contractors Diverse Business statuses.

13. The last sentence of Section 4 of the Service Contract Terms and Conditions reads: “COMMERCE may, in its sole discretion, withhold ten percent (10%) from each payment until acceptance by COMMERCE of the final report (or completion of the project, etc.).” Under what circumstances do you anticipate Commerce exercising this right? Our concern relates to having received an adequate amount of grant funds prior to being able to disburse the funds to the grantees.
**ANSWER:** This is a reimbursement based contract. Reimbursements can be submitted up to weekly if needed. We can make that adjustment in the contract terms during contract negotiations. Reimbursement may be withheld if complete back up documentation is not submitted with the reimbursement request.

14. Please clarify the anticipated data reporting requirements for subcontractors (Section 5 of the Service Contract Terms and Conditions and Section 36 of the General Terms and Conditions).
**ANSWER:** Contractors must submit this report on subcontractors that receive over $1,000 payment per invoice: ReportableExpenseTemplate.xlsx (live.com) You can watch a training video on this here: Changes to the Invoicing Process for Contractors from Department of Commerce on Vimeo

7. a. Similarly, please clarify whether this is only specific to subcontractors who are involved with issuing payments or if it applies to any subcontractors with whom we
engage on this broader project. This is helpful information early to ensure that we are properly documenting our relationships with key third parties upfront.

**ANSWER:** Anonymous demographic data of recipients who payments were made to including: recipient age, gender, length of time at current agency, current salary/wage, educational attainment, race, ethnicity and geographic location must be submitted with each invoice.

15. The last sentence of Section 6 of the Service Contract Terms and Conditions relates to Fidelity Insurance requirements for subcontractors. Please clarify whether this is only specific to subcontractors who are involved with issuing payments, or if it applies to any subcontractors with whom we engage on this broader project that may receive more than $10,000/year.

**ANSWER:** This applies to the contractor and any subcontractors that issue payments. We can clarify this during contract negotiations if needed.

16. Will employees hired between the first and second stipend be eligible to apply? If not, what is the vision for residual funds based on employee attrition?

**ANSWER:** Yes, employees hired between the first and second stipend are eligible to apply. We do not anticipate all of the funding will be requested, and in fact there will be significant unspent funds.

17. Does the language requirement extend to customer support operations or only to application materials?

**ANSWER:** Both.

18. Does the administration of the RFP include application assistance?

**ANSWER:** We expect the contractor to provide assistance to people who apply for the stipends.

19. How many commerce employees will be designated to guide and support administration of the program?

**ANSWER:** There will be a program coordinator to pay reimbursement requests and a program manager available for questions.

20. Marketing vision - mediums, regional percentages, previous affiliates?

**ANSWER:** Commerce will provide a list of eligible organizations and the contractor will have to design a marketing strategy to inform and engage eligible employees from those organizations.

21. Would outreach be exclusive to the list of eligible organizations that Commerce will supply (pg. 5) or can the contractor conduct outreach to additional organizations?

**ANSWER:** Outreach should only be to the eligible organizations.

22. Can you provide the list of eligible organizations?

**ANSWER:** We anticipate having the list available by July 30 and estimate it will be about 250 organizations.

23. Is there a maximum number of recipients per agency?

**ANSWER:** No.
24. Is there a required minimum work history at a particular agency, or are you eligible even if you’ve only worked for one day at an eligible agency?
   **ANSWER:** Recipients must be currently employed at the eligible organization, no minimum work history required.

25. In the case of an overabundance of eligible applicants is there a process for prioritization?
   **ANSWER:** We do not anticipate all of the funding will be requested, and in fact there will be significant unspent funds.

26. Is the 80% AMI threshold relative to the state or the city/county/region/municipality of the applicant?
   **ANSWER:** County.

27. Does full or part time employment impact eligibility?
   **ANSWER:** No.

28. What equity based criteria beyond AMI (race, gender, sexuality, exposure to violence, addiction, ability, housing instability, household composition, etc.) are we able to include in the creation of a prioritization matrix to ensure those with the most need are served?
   **ANSWER:** None. We anticipate there will be more than enough funds to assist all of the eligible staff working in the eligible organizations.

29. Is the application expected to be a closed-loop process, in that only the Department of Commerce provided organizations may apply, or will it be open to more broadly applicable organizations?
   **ANSWER:** Commerce will provide the list of eligible organizations.

30. Are there requirements for processing turnaround time between the receipt of a complete application and the processing of a payment? This is in relation to RFP 1.2 regarding “administering stipend payments”.
   **ANSWER:** There is a tight timeline to fit both payment windows in six months apart and all completed by June 30. For example, 2500 people apply in October 2022, they can reapply for the second payment, six months after receipt of the first payment, in March 2023.

31. Does Commerce have a process for invoice inquiry if payment to the contractor extends past 30 days?
   **ANSWER:** Final invoices for all costs incurred under this contract through June 30, 2023 will be due mid-July 2023.

32. Will Commerce accept a proposal that creates consistency with subsection reference numbers? For example, Section 3.3.A has two subsections without reference numbers, whereas 3.3.B has numbered subsections.
   **ANSWER:** Yes.

33. Will marketing activity need to be completed by September 1, 2022 or is the requirement that it is initiated by September 1, 2022? (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** Marketing should start no later than September 1.
34. What date does Commerce expect to provide the eligible organization list? Would Commerce consider sharing the eligible organization list with release of their RFP answers so that bidders can plan and prepare with their proposal? (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** We anticipate having the list available by July 30 and estimate it will be about 250 organizations.

35. Does Commerce have an estimate of volume per month for initial and second stipend claims? If so, please share that forecast. (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** This has been difficult to estimate but our best guess is there will be less than 2500 people who are eligible for the stipend payment. We estimate they would all request the second payment six months after they receive the first payment.

36. If a mailed stipend check comes back for wrong address or another reason, who’s responsible to get the updated contact info? To what extent does Commerce expect the contractor to research and reissue stipend checks that are returned via US mail?
   **ANSWER:** Commerce expects the contractor to make reasonable efforts to ensure returned checks are re-sent and follow up with the applicant is made.

37. Can applicants submit for an initial stipend for the duration of the period of performance, July 15, 2022, to June 30, 2023? Is there a date beyond which the applicant can no longer request an initial stipend (RFP 1.5)
   **ANSWER:** Eligible applicants can submit for up to two payments between when the contractor opens the program (no later than October 1, 2022) and six months after. The program ends June 30, 2023.

38. If Commerce allows the application window for the first payment to be submitted throughout the period of performance, will Commerce approve an extension of the period of performance to accommodate a second payment? (RFP 1.5)
   **ANSWER:** Per the authorizing legislation, the program ends June 30, 2023. Commerce does not have discretion over this end date. Final invoices for all costs incurred under this contract through June 30, 2023 will be due mid-July 2023.

39. Section 2.2 of the RFP refers to PST, however, during the months indicated in this RFP (May – July), Washington state is adhering to PDT (Pacific Daylight Time). Please clarify if PST should be observed for submittal deadlines.
   **ANSWER:** Please observe Pacific Time standards.

40. What dataset should be referenced to verify Area Median Income? (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** Income limits are based on Area Median Income (AMI) which can be located for each county at: www.huduser.gov (Data Sets, Income Limits).

41. Does Commerce have guidance established for applications submitted on behalf of an eligible recipient? (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** We do not have guidelines established for applications submitted on behalf of an eligible recipient. All documents that require signature need to ensure the person has authority to sign the submitted proposal.
42. Commerce prefers electronic payment methods; will the applicants be able to choose payment form – check or ACH? (RFP 2.16)  
**ANSWER:** The contractor can issue checks or make electronic funds transfers or both.

43. Will Commerce allow the contractor to utilize the SAVE System to check citizenship status? Are citizens, Green card holders, and non-citizens all eligible for the stipend?  
**ANSWER:** Please see eligibility requirements in question # 1. No additional eligibility will be allowed.

44. Does Commerce have a documentation requirement for verifying proof of income? (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** The contractor can use a current pay stub from an applicant for proof of current employment with the eligible organization.

45. Will the contractor be permitted to utilize EIV to verify income? (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** I don’t think the EIV would be applicable. The contractor can use a current pay stub from an applicant to calculate income and if it meets the county AMI.

46. Does Commerce have a documentation requirement for proof of current employment with the eligible entity? (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** The contractor can use a current pay stub from an applicant for proof of current employment with the eligible organization.

47. Does Commerce have a list of languages the contractor should support? If so, please provide. (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** No.

48. Will the contractor be required to provide an appeal process if an applicant is denied based on the eligibility review?  
**ANSWER:** This sounds like a good idea.

49. Will Commerce audit determinations of eligibility? (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** Commerce will monitor program activities, including determinations of eligibility.

50. Will the contractor need to verify entity eligibility if the entity is listed on the eligible organization list? (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** No.

51. Do applicants for the stipend need to be at least 18 years of age?  
**ANSWER:** No.

52. Does family size affect the income limit when referencing area median income? (RFP 1.2)  
**ANSWER:** Income limits are based on Area Median Income (AMI) which can be located for each county at: www.huduser.gov (Data Sets, Income Limits).
53. Are the stipend funds divided equally for first and second payments? (RFP 1.4) If more applicants request the stipend, then funds are available will Commerce provide guidance for claims rejection?
   **ANSWER:** There will be more than enough funds to assist all of the eligible staff working in the eligible organizations.

54. Does Commerce require proof of delivery confirmation when stipend checks are sent via US mail? (RFP 3.4A)
   **ANSWER:** No but the contractor could initiate.

55. Please confirm we send the full stipend (up to $2K) payment and do not withdraw payments for federal and state income taxes and for Social Security and Medicare taxes.
   **ANSWER:** Correct.

56. If we send a stipend (up to $2K), confirm that we document the payment with an IRS 1099 form.
   **ANSWER:** Correct.

57. Section 1.2 indicates a stipend payment of up to $2000 will be made to eligible homeless service provider employees, what is the payment scale, and will taxes be deducted from the laddered payment scale? (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** The contractor will ask the eligible person how much up to $2000 they need to meet economic needs. The contractor will provide that direct amount. No taxes are deducted.

58. Both the Authorizing Legislation and the RFP mention “up to $2000”. Are there scenarios where the eligible applicant receives less than $2000? If so, what are those scenarios? (RFP 1.2)
   **ANSWER:** The contractor will ask the eligible person how much up to $2000 they need to meet immediate economic needs.

59. The authorizing legislation (page 116, lines 9-11 states that “payments are on a first-come basis, first-served basis and there is no individual entitlement to receive a stipend.” This statement was not included in the RFP; does the first-come, first-served statement reflect the intent of COMMERCE?
   **ANSWER:** There will be more than enough funds to assist all of the eligible staff working in the eligible organizations.

60. When we submit our cost proposal (RFP 3.4), should our fee come in as a percentage of the funding in RFP 1.4 or as a dollar amount?
   **ANSWER:** Please provide both the dollar amount and the percentage as applicable. These numbers will be verified and checked to see if they are responsive to the 1.4 funding requirement.
61. If the fee proposed is supposed to be in the form of a percentage of the funding in RFP 1.4, should the monthly invoice be a percent markup on what we process or would it be a flat dollar amount of the fee divided evenly across the months in the performance period?

**ANSWER:** Flat dollar amount of the fee divided evenly across the months of the performance period. During contract negotiations this will be fully verified and determined by the contract manager on how to move forward.

62. When we submit our cost proposal (RFP 3.4), what do you consider the base figure of “up to five percent for outreach and marketing” found in RFP 1.4?

**ANSWER:** This base amount should not exceed 5% of the proposal total amount.

63. In both the Technical Submission and the Management Submission, there is reference to “the study.” Will you please clarify what this is referring to?

**ANSWER:** This is an error, please disregard.

64. Has Commerce contemplated cash-flow considerations for a reimbursement-based contract of this magnitude, where invoicing is stated to be allowed only monthly? For example, could there be room for consideration of weekly invoicing + more rapid reimbursement, given the size/scale of funds moving quickly (and the corresponding impact on the contractor to have to “float” a large amount on behalf of the State)?

**ANSWER:** Reimbursements can be submitted up to weekly if needed.

65. Would the contract allow for direct payment to a third party (for example, landlord) toward an employee’s account rather than exclusively requiring direct payment to the recipient? There are two important reasons/considerations for this question: (1) Assistance paid directly to a third party (e.g., landlord) goes farther than a payment directly to the employee (because it would become a taxable event for the employee); and (2) if a cash payment is made directly to a recipient, then there becomes additional time/delay, cost, and burden with securing the recipients’ information (for IRS purposes) before disbursements can be made.

**ANSWER:** The contractor can elect to make payments to a third party on behalf of the eligible homeless service provider employee if they request it. The contractor must be able to collect W9s, and issue 1099s.

66. Template language in the RFP states the right of Commerce to withhold 10% of reimbursement until the end of the contract. In a contract of this nature (primarily pass-through direct-assistance funds, of large scale) this could be an overly burdensome requirement. Does Commerce have a perspective to share on this aspect of the RFP?

**ANSWER:** Commerce would withhold reimbursement if back up documentation or reporting wasn’t complete when invoices are submitted. This is a method to mitigate the risk of work not fully performed on the contract and would not come from the funds needed to be distributed to the public.

67. Could the contract allow for a subcontractor to manage a small percentage of the contract (example being an instance where the contractor is an organization with employees who would qualify for assistance, so that a subcontractor would be responsible for maintaining arms-length distance if an employee of the contracting agency were to apply)?
ANSWER: Yes, if that is necessary. If the contractor is also an eligible organization they will need to build in additional internal controls so that there are levels of separation in administrative duties. Additionally, the primary contracts terms and conditions need to be passed down to the subcontractor to follow as it pertains to the contract requirements.

68. Does the below conflict with the body of the RFP re: percentage allowable for Admin?
ANSWER: If the contractor has a federally approved indirect cost rate, they can use that for grant administration. If they do not have a federally approved indirect cost rate the 15% for administrative costs is the cap.

19. INDIRECT COSTS
The Grantee shall provide their indirect cost rate that has been negotiated between their entity and the Federal Government. If no such rate exists a de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) will be used.

69. Does the below include intellectual property (such as coding, website/intake functionality, database) or is the intention of this statement more limited in scope, like to marketing/outreach materials?
ANSWER: It is limited to what is in the scope.

13. COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS
Unless otherwise provided, all Materials produced under this Contract shall be considered "works for hire" as defined by the U.S. Copyright Act and shall be owned by COMMERCE. COMMERCE shall be considered the author of such Materials. In the event the Materials are not considered “works for hire” under the U.S. Copyright laws, the Contractor hereby irrevocably assigns all right, title, and interest in all Materials, including all intellectual property rights, moral rights, and rights of publicity to COMMERCE effective from the moment of creation of such Materials.