

II-B: SCOPE OF WORK

1. Proposer's Information

The mission of Lifelong Adult Education Services, Inc. is to provide educational and psychological services to adults with cognitive or learning disorders, developmental delays, borderline intellectual functioning, limited English proficiency and cultural differences, mental illnesses, emotional problems, and/or physical disabilities. The goal of our programs and activities is to empower these high-risk individuals, build their self-confidence, and help them develop realistic self-perceptions that will lead to personal, academic, and vocational successes.

Our clients are referred primarily by public agencies and programs such as Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and Child Protective Services at the Denver Department of Human Services, Arapahoe/Douglas and TriCounty Works! programs, WIA Youth Services in Denver and Arapahoe/Douglas Counties, and the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Many referred individuals are receiving or applying for benefits from Social Security (e.g. SSI/SSDI) because of their physical, mental or learning disabilities. Individual or private clients from Colorado and surrounding states also refer themselves to Lifelong for assistance with educational or vocational issues. For our corporate and institutional clients we provide disability, learning disability, and mental health consultation and evaluation services. Private business concerns with in-house literacy and training programs (e.g., Lucent Technologies), universities and colleges, and national organizations requiring assistance with their disability documentation and/or development of disability policy (e.g., the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners, and the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners) also frequently take advantage of our disability expertise.

We currently have several contracts to serve clients of the Denver Department of Human Services. Administered by the Mayor's office of Economic Development, we currently have in place a six-month contract allowing us to provide 65 psychological evaluations, follow up service provider consultation, and more than 1000 hours of specialized instruction to TANF participants who have or who are suspected of having disabilities. Last year we provided 135 evaluations and over 2000 hours of direct services to TANF participants. We also have a contract with the Family Counseling Program (FCP) at the Denver Department of Human Services to provide up to 1050 hours of individual psychotherapy and life skills/behavioral therapy to TANF participants with developmental or other diagnosed disabilities. As a Core Service Provider for Child Protective Services at the Denver Department of Human Services, we provide psychological evaluations (court-ordered or otherwise), counseling and in-home therapeutic services. The current contract is for up to \$28,000 of service provision. Our agreements to provide these same services to Arapahoe/Douglas Works! and TriCounty Works! TANF programs are open-ended, and last year we provided 54 psychological evaluations and 300 hours of specialized instruction to their clients with learning problems. Lifelong also provides its services as a vendor to the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and in 2004, we provided 50 evaluations, 500 hours of specialized instruction, and 479 hours of psychotherapy and career counseling.

This proposal offers program solutions that address existing gaps in TANF service provision for high-risk participants in Skill Building (Level II), and Pre-Employment and Training (Level III) levels of job-readiness as defined by the Office of Economic Development's Division of Workforce Development. Underserved individuals in these levels include participants who are slower learners, who have first languages other than English, and who have different cultural backgrounds. Those who require more guidance in identifying a realistic vocational direction and in following through with job training, obtaining, and retaining a job tend to be underserved and are targeted by this proposal. For over ten years, Lifelong has served individuals whose histories include (1) poor or inconsistent performance in work, job training, and school environments; (2) unwillingness to participate or follow through with appropriate pre-employment and post-employment activities; (3) poor coping and decision-making skills that interfere with life and work; and (4) documented or perceived cognitive, emotional, or other difficulties that impact economic self-sufficiency. Our group of practitioners includes psychologists, therapists, and special educators with demonstrated expertise and sensitivity to the underlying issues and needs of individuals from diverse and multicultural backgrounds who contend with personal and external barriers to success. Our creativity and flexibility allow us to adjust our approach as new situations arise; our ability to adapt quickly to client needs makes us well suited to serving the hardest-to-serve TANF participants.

2. Program Services and Proposed Outcomes of the *Work Matters* Program

The *Work Matters* program is intended for clients whose cognitive limitations, linguistic and cultural differences, and functional limitations negatively affect their potential for success in the workplace. Before an individual can get or keep a job, there needs to be a good match between abilities, skills, and aptitudes of the individual and the abilities, skills, and aptitudes required by the job. A good match of person to job requires identification of these aptitudes, abilities, and skills and the selection of a realistic career based on these capabilities. Keeping a job requires appropriate interpersonal communication skills for interacting with customers, coworkers and supervisors, and requires a positive work ethic and acceptance of personal responsibility. Finally, job upgrades and wage increases depend on consistent, good job performance and a willingness to seek additional job training in the workplace or at a vocational training institution.

The *Work Matters* program at Lifelong is comprised of three integrated essential therapeutic services that address the pre-employment and training barriers of individuals participating in TANF programs at Denver Department of Human Services who are at high risk for failure. Those who learn more slowly than their peers but have no disabling conditions that qualify them for other intensive services, those with limited English skills and/or limited knowledge about work culture, those with limited work histories, and/or those who are unable to identify appropriate careers that are a match with their abilities, skills, and interests are targeted by these integrated services:

- **Structured Group Experience:** The core of *Work Matters*, structured groups are facilitated by therapists experienced with the needs of this population. Topics of weekly group sessions important for job retention include home management after the job is obtained, understanding and dealing with work stresses, critical thinking and decision-making skills, and working-parent parenting skills.
- **Therapeutic Work-Adjustment Counseling and Vocational Life Skills:** This service consists of individual and small group therapy with a heavier emphasis on developing vocational “soft” skills and good attitudes toward work. The service is provided as needed in work, training, or home venues in addition to sessions at Lifelong’s offices.
- **Career Counseling:** This service is intended for high-risk clients who have had difficulty identifying an appropriate vocational direction that matches their abilities and skills with jobs available in the Denver job market. Job retention is less problematic when appropriate career goals are set. Career counseling can be provided concurrently with other services or alone.

Structured Group Experiences: The Core of *Work Matters*

The goal of *Work Matters* is to provide hands-on, issue-based therapeutic experiences that allow for intensive personal reflection and growth for participants with below average intellectual abilities, and/or cultural differences, and/or communication difficulties. Balancing work or training responsibilities with raising children and managing home life can overwhelm all of us; for TANF participants who have limited English proficiency or a history of failure due to low abilities and skills, doing so without guidance or instruction is nearly impossible. *Work Matters*’ structured group experiences provide a distraction-free setting for intensive group counseling. Even briefly separating participants from their children and other family members can help them to begin to identify and alter behaviors that interfere with their ability to develop more healthy coping strategies. Participants are guided toward a shift in their perceptions about working. Enabling clients to establish and maintain appropriate boundaries at work and in both family and social contexts helps to make work a priority without neglect of home, family, and personal responsibilities. Participants’ ability to work collaboratively, to respect other people, and to use appropriate interpersonal communication skills are enhanced as they complete each session. Life and independent living skills are improved. Weekly topics include anger management, tolerating differences in work and non-work settings, identifying and removing barriers to poor follow through (back-up plans for child-care/transportation, time management and organization), and setting and maintaining good boundaries.

Sixteen weekly one and a half-hour sessions are planned (please see Attachment A) and two one hour-long individual sessions are included. Work Adjustment Counseling/Vocational Life Skills (see below) development is strongly recommended as an adjunct service to reinforce the skills and insights gained in the group experience and to help individuals to generalize what they are learning to their home and work lives.

Two therapists and twelve clients will participate in a structured group to maximize individual therapy and group processes. Tuition for the *Work Matters* structured group experiences, and individual counseling sessions is \$650 per participant, allowing us to serve up to sixty participants during the contract period. Five *Work Matters* structured group experiences will be scheduled during the contract year. Optimal referring sources include MOED staff (Group Services, One/Five-Day Assessment Team, and Employment Specialists), DHS case managers, and Catholic Charities Navigators. Other community-based organizations (CBO) and service providers offering intensive case management, traditional job readiness and retention services, and job-specific vocational or academic training will be contacted to identify at-risk clients who would benefit. Our recruiting strategy involves working closely with primary and secondary providers to encourage them to identify prospective participants early through case reviews and staffing recommendations.

Performance Outcome for Structured Group Experience: 75% (45) of the 60 individuals referred will successfully engage in and complete this therapeutic service. Consistent attendance, completion of homework assignments, and follow-through with work or employment and training-related activities will be used as behavioral measures of success during post-service performance evaluations. During initial individual sessions with the therapist, clients will identify three areas of concern that interfere with their ability to achieve personal and vocational success (e.g., “I have difficulty controlling my anger and this has led to my inability to hold a job.”). At the second individual session, the client’s efforts toward reducing or alleviating identified problems and achievement of individual goals will be discussed and documented. Getting a job, holding a job, and getting promotions and wage increases is the desired longer-term outcome of this service, but we may no longer be in direct contact with clients as they attain this outcome.

Therapeutic Work Adjustment Counseling and Vocational Life Skills Development

Therapeutic work adjustment counseling and vocational life skills development is intended to develop more appropriate work attitudes, behaviors, and interpersonal communication skills in our clients. Helping clients to develop more appropriate life skills and coping strategies is essential for their ability to get and hold a job. TANF participants who are slower learners, who have limited English proficiency, or have other cultural values, may have different expectations concerning work and personal responsibility. This causes them to seem non-compliant when in fact, they want to increase their skills so they can go to work and support their families. Therapeutic work adjustment training enhances an individual’s participation rates and long-term job retention because the client can learn how to manage personal issues so she can better follow through with TANF agreements and requirements. Therapeutic work-adjustment and vocational life skills focuses on the practical, real-life needs of the client, which increases the potential for self-sufficiency, family stability, and personal growth. A therapeutic approach to work adjustment and vocational “soft” skill development helps clients understand their emotional and socio-cultural reactions to family and work-related issues. We have found that a behavioral approach to these clients that emphasizes here-

and-now events and problems has been very successful. *Demonstrating* how to interact with others appropriately, *showing* how to be a better parent, and *supervising* practice of interpersonal skills in real-life situations are examples of behavioral approaches used for teaching vocational life skills. With the therapist, the client explores their emotional experiences while they are fresh in mind and more easily identifiable and solvable.

Therapeutic work adjustment counseling involves individualized and small-group client activities. Improving attitudes toward work, developing good work habits and manners, understanding spoken and unspoken workplace rules and cultural norms, solving small problems before they grow into larger ones, and managing stress are a few of the goals and objectives of these activities. At-risk clients referred for therapeutic work adjustment services have probably failed to grasp the “soft skills” element of job readiness included in traditional, larger-group programs that assume certain cognitive abilities, academic skills, and behavioral readiness. Our primary goal is to address the underlying issues affecting the participant’s lack of work readiness and history of non-compliance in other programs, activities, or work. Hands-on experiential activities that allow clients to actively practice and reinforce concepts and skills are provided. We do not rely on “talk” therapy, lectures, or textbooks for teaching skills that are better learned in the here-and-now where they are felt and experienced by the client.

Performance Outcomes for Therapeutic Work Adjustment Counseling and Vocational Life Skills Development

Depending on the severity of participant needs, 75% (24) of the 30 individuals referred to this service will achieve realistic work adjustment goals that increase their employability. Examples of positive outcomes that clients may develop with Lifelong specialists include:

- An increase in the hours of program/activity participation to meet federal participation requirements;
- An increase in the follow-through with TANF IRC agreements, reflected in participation hours;
- The completion of an appropriate employment and training program to increase employability;
- The modification of an IRC that reflects employment and training goals that are more appropriate for the client’s cognitive, academic, and language abilities and personal/family realities;
- Exit from the TANF system.

Specialized Career Counseling

Lifelong specialists will assist at-risk TANF participants in the identification of appropriate career and employment goals following administration of career inventories and review of prior evaluations and work history. Many clients and service providers continue to use a trial-and-error, “cross-your-fingers and maybe the dream will come true” method of choosing career paths and job training programs. In spite of specific and

explicit career and job recommendations made in Lifelong's psychological evaluations and during face-to-face staffings, we often find that clients and service providers have selected a job training program and career direction that is inappropriate for the client's abilities and skills. These clients end up being recycled through the TANF system after they are washed out of their jobs or job training programs. One way to improve career decision-making and to promote better use of job training resources is to permit experts in performance, learning, and cognitive potential to be involved in the career counseling, planning, and implementation stages of this very important component to employment and retention.

Clients who do not have appropriate career plans, who have no idea of a suitable career direction, and/or who have a limited or nonexistent work history should be referred for this service. Data from standardized career inventories administered during intake, information from available psychological evaluation reports, and other evaluative measures that generate a realistic picture of a client's potential will be gathered and analyzed by Lifelong specialists. This client information will guide the client and Lifelong counselor as they engage in the therapeutic process of career identification and selection. Together, they will identify the client's cognitive abilities, academic skills, aptitudes, and interests and use this information to make realistic career decisions and choose the most appropriate training or on-the-job training program. Individualized career plans will be provided to referral sources in a user-friendly, easy-to-follow format.

Performance Outcomes for Specialized Career Counseling

We anticipate that at least 30 individuals that we are targeting in Community Based Services category will require specialized career counseling, and at least 24 of those participating in this service, or 75 percent, will achieve a positive outcome. Successful outcomes include identifying appropriate employment and training programs that match appropriate career goals or switching to employment/training goals more appropriate to client interests, aptitudes, and skills.

3. Program Innovation: What Differentiates Lifelong Services from the Rest

Our level of expertise in serving clients such as those who form the majority of TANF participants is very high. After performing more than 600 psychological and cognitive evaluations on TANF participants since 1998, we have a better handle on the characteristics of the highest risk participants than any other service provider could possibly have. We have realistic expectations of these clients based on our extensive first-hand and in-depth knowledge of their characteristics. Our service development, provision, and evaluation are guided by this knowledge. Many of the targeted Level III participants are slower learners and their limitations result in far fewer pre-employment and training choices in the current service delivery system aimed at higher-functioning individuals. Slow learners tend to acquire new vocational and academic skills more slowly than their peers do and they reach peaks in the skill acquisition at lower levels. People who are slower learners do not usually qualify for disability and long-term supportive services because they are not considered disabled by any of the classification systems currently in use. These individuals also are not able to participate in the majority

of post-secondary vocational training programs because they do not have strong enough reasoning and problem-solving abilities and do not possess the required academic skills. People with limited English proficiency also experience difficulties in qualifying for and accessing services; people with first languages other than English do not qualify for disability-related services and their limited English skills keep them from meeting minimum entry-level academic skill requirements for most of the existing programs offered by TANF. Some individuals targeted by this RFP have poor language, coping, and problem-solving skills, which makes them seem non-compliant and uncooperative, and this causes service providers to judge them as hard-to-serve individuals with a poor prognosis for gainful employment. Many Level III participants require an approach to career counseling and work adjustment training that is radically different from the services currently available to them. Other contractors provide traditional job readiness, job search, and career counseling useful for TANF individuals who are job-ready. Other service providers remain ill equipped for addressing the underlying cognitive and emotional issues that make their at-risk TANF clients unwilling or unable to follow through with vocational training. All Lifelong's services have been designed to address the issues that other programs struggle to understand.

The Therapeutic Advantage: Lifelong's therapeutic approach to the proposed services acknowledges the unique emotional and mental health issues inherent in this underserved population. We have seen the most success with high-risk clients when we provide a traditional therapeutic relationship along with concrete activities that build problem-solving skills and accomplish specific socio-vocational and socio-emotional goals. Our proposed services combine traditional therapy with more pragmatic, employment-related therapeutic activities, which offer the needed supplemental support to strengthen the non-therapeutic job readiness and on-the-job retention activities offered by other service providers.

We are easily differentiated from other contractors' services and programs because we use cognitive and behavioral methods that identify and address the here-and-now problems that interfere with performing the actual job task. *Showing* how to do a single step in a multi-step process, *providing a simplified visual cue* to remember the step and its order in the multi-step process, and *supervising practice* of that step before introducing the next one exemplifies our cognitive/behavioral approach to building vocational skill sets. Each industry sector has specific training challenges affected by such factors as changes in technology, in the economy, and in the labor market, the entry-level skills of the prospective employee, the size of the organization, the resources allocated to the training of personnel, and the trainer's experience in teaching, modeling, and giving feedback to the employee. Lifelong has the expertise to provide therapeutic work adjustment to clients training or working in all of the targeted industries and occupations.

We believe that job retention and the potential for wage increases and job upgrades depend on five prerequisite conditions. Before an individual can get or keep a job, there must be an appropriate match between the individual's abilities and skills and the abilities and skills required to do the job. A good match requires realistic

identification of aptitudes, abilities, and skills and the selection of a realistic career choice based on these capabilities. Second, an acceptable level of job readiness before the job search requires appropriate skill training with adequate time, support, and trainer feedback to learn and practice essential job duties and soft vocational skills. Third, keeping a job requires appropriate interpersonal communication skills for interacting with customers, coworkers, and supervisors. Fourth, keeping a job requires a positively work ethic and assumption of personal responsibility. Finally, job upgrades and wage increases often depend on the individual's consistently good job performance and willingness to seek additional job training in the workplace or at vocational training sites. Our therapeutic work adjustment and vocational life skills development, career counseling, and structured group experiences address the pervasive issues and difficulties that at-risk clients face every day as they make genuine attempts to comply with TANF requirements. Lifelong has a proven record of accomplishment in its work with difficult-to-serve clients. We possess diverse professional qualifications and experiences that allow us to address training issues in both occupation-specific and global employment skill sets with a thorough understanding of the underlying cognitive and emotional issues that have caused individuals to fail in their work experiences.

Flexible, Creative Scheduling: We try to be flexible in our scheduling and in the physical location of client services. We can coordinate the scheduling of our therapeutic services to compliment the schedules of other employment and training programs offering structured work activities, subsidized work, and unsubsidized work activities for Level III and Level II participants. We can meet clients before, during, or after their primary job training program or work schedules on weekdays, and when necessary, on weekends. While we encourage our clients to meet at our facility because it functions as a safe haven, we also meet them at their homes, workplaces, training sites, or other service provider sites as necessary.

4. Tracking and Evaluation

By the very nature of our therapeutic approach, we evaluate individual client progress, needs, and barriers before and after every activity or therapeutic session. We conduct regular informal reviews with the client to discuss progress, activity follow-through, participation hours, and goal attainment. As soon as we see that original goals cannot be met, we work with the individual to redefine performance goals that are more realistic and attainable. Because of our ongoing client monitoring, we are able to provide up-to-the-minute client program status (e.g., progress, activity follow-through, participation hours, and goal attainment) via telephone, email, fax, and face-to-face contact with TANF case managers, their DWD counterparts, and other relevant staff. We provide monthly written client progress reports to DHS case managers to document client progress. We initiate and participate in staffing sessions to address barriers with the client, the case manager, and appropriate service providers.

Individual case files contain biographical information, relevant assessment information from current and previous service providers, and detailed case management notes. Contact hours, attendance, progress reports, samples of client work, disability-

related requests/accommodation, and other relevant data are kept in each file. When a participant is referred for a Lifelong service, the client's data and file are managed and tracked by the primary staff member responsible for providing services. All clients must meet with a Lifelong staff member for their initial intake for services, and every client must sign the mandatory disclosure statement required by the State of Colorado that details grievance procedures, client rights, and limits of confidentiality in counseling or psychotherapy. According to state and federal laws and the ethical standards of psychologists and practitioners in related fields, all files must remain confidential unless the client provides written permission for release of this information. Arrangements will be made with program monitors so that they can evaluate Lifelong's record keeping system within the state-defined legal requirements for confidentiality.

Weekly and monthly, we update client participation hours for the services we provide and enter client service information to the Job Link tracking system used by the Mayor's Office of Economic Development Division of Workforce Development (DWD). We meet regularly with DWD staff responsible for monitoring participation hours, contract compliance, and program issues. We submit monthly/quarterly reports to DWD in accordance with the forms and procedures defined for fee-for-service contractors. We constantly evaluate our program performance, and we initiate contact with program/contract specialists when we have program concerns or are exceeding or falling short of our projected goals. At present, all referrals to Lifelong are initiated, processed and approved by DWD or Denver Department of Human Services (DHS) staff members; whenever there is a decrease or increase in referrals, Lifelong contacts designated agency personnel to request assistance so we can meet our contract goals. Because our services are customized to the individual's needs, a decline in attendance or a sudden change in client participation or performance can cause the client, Lifelong, DWD, and/or DHS staff to initiate communication and assess whether changes in services and activities are necessary. Eventually we hope that DWD and DHS data collection and system-wide tracking efforts can generate employment and long-term retention and wage increase data on clients that Lifelong has provided supplemental or support services to so everyone involved in program evaluation can gauge our contribution to client success.

5. Budget and Cost Effectiveness

All of Lifelong's services are provided to agencies and individuals on the same fee-for-service basis. Estimated numbers of participants who might be referred for our services are based on our experience with the hard-to-serve TANF population as a whole, but it is understood that Lifelong is not guaranteed these referrals under any contract with DWD. Our fee structure was developed to satisfy the requirements of the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for the services it purchases from vendors. The formulas used by the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are based on CPT codes and conversion factors borrowed from the insurance industry. To encourage referrals from rehabilitation counselors and to make our services affordable to our individual clients, our rates have been set competitively below the maximum rates set by that agency. We do not charge different rates to different agencies or individuals unless a prior contract has fixed the fees we charge below the levels of the current fee structure

(i.e., if a contractual agreement pre-dates changes to the fee requirements of the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation).

As a fee for service provider of services, each service we provide must support itself in terms of the revenues generated. Our accounting system is set up accordingly using the “cost” or cash accounting method, and the billing/invoicing that occurs each month must support all salaries and administrative costs incurred. We absorb the administrative costs connected to the projected fee-for-service budget summarized in the following chart:

**Units of Service, Number of Participants, Projected Cost per Person, and
Total Annual Cost in the Fee-for-Service Budget Request**

| <i>Service</i> | <i>Unit of Service</i> | <i>Cost per Unit</i> | <i>Number of Participants</i> | <i>Units per Client</i> | <i>Cost per Participant</i> | <i>Total Units</i> | <i>Annual Cost</i> |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Therapeutic Work Adjustment Counseling and Vocational Life Skills (Community Based Services) | One hour | | 30 | 50 avg, may vary | | 1500 | |
| Career Counseling (Community Based Services) | One hour | | 30 | 35 avg. may vary | | 1050 | |
| Structured Group Experience (Mental Health Services) | One “tuition” unit | | 60 | 1 | | 60 | |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | |