
Sponsor: Workforce Solutions

Meeting Date: 11/21/2023

Title: 2025 Contract Extension with Minnesota Family Investment
Program Employment Services Providers

File Number: 2023-494

Background and Rationale:

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions operates and administers the Employment Services portion of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and Diversionary Work Program (DWP) in Ramsey County. MFIP is the state of Minnesota's version of the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, operated by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

MFIP assists families with children meet their basic needs, while helping parents move to financial stability through work. In preparation for work, and/or retaining employment, participants are required to engage in Employment Development Plan goals and activities. MFIP employment services are provided directly by Workforce Solutions staff as well as by contracted providers.

DWP is a short term (four month) work-focused program that helps parents quickly find work so that they do not need to enroll into MFIP. The 2023 Minnesota legislative session resulted in the sunseting of DWP by March 2026. Currently, the DWP employment services are provided by Workforce Solutions staff.

In addition to MFIP and DWP employment services, the Consolidated Funds support the following:

- Extension services: families that are post 60-months of the MFIP lifetime limit.
- Emergency and Crisis Services/Childcare/Administration: through Financial Assistance Services.
- Family Stabilization Services.
- Support Services.
- Paid work experience.
- Career coaching and education or occupational skills training.
- Incorporation of a family-centered service delivery model.
- Racial disparity reduction services.
- Meaningful community engagement.

Every five years, Workforce Solutions invites qualified contractors to competitively bid for the opportunity to deliver MFIP employment services. On May 1, 2019, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions released a Request for Proposal (RFP), in which, MFIP services began on January 1, 2020. Upon board approval, the selected MFIP Employment Service providers below began operations in 2020.

- Avivo, 1900 Chicago Avenue, Minneapolis MN 55404
- American Indian Family Center, 579 Wells Street, Saint Paul, MN 55130
- Hmong American Partnership, 1075 Arcade Street, Saint Paul, MN 55106
- hired, 217 5th Avenue North, Suite 300, Minneapolis, MN 55401
- Young Women's Christian Association, 375 Selby Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102

- Goodwill Easter Seals of Minnesota, 553 Fairview Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55104
- Network for the Development of Children of African Descent, 655 Fairview Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55104
- Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio, 797 East Seventh Street, Saint Paul, MN 55106

The term of these agreements is set to expire December 31, 2024 with no remaining renewal options. After careful consideration, and to maintain continuity of services to residents, Workforce Solutions is returning to the board to request approval to extend the term of the current MFIP employment service contracts for an additional 12-month period from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.

Postponing the release of the next MFIP RFP to 2025 will provide the additional time needed to carefully consider and re-evaluate MFIP service delivery in Ramsey County for the following reasons:

- Since COVID began in 2020 and waivers having ended in late 2021, the caseload size in Ramsey County has been unstable and unpredictable, going both up and down. While this will continue to be difficult to predict, we have only begun seeing some stabilization in caseloads in 2023. With caseload size fluctuation there are also family support needs that have become more complex and intensive coming out of the pandemic.
- Ramsey County's recovery out of the COVID-19 pandemic has been lower and slower than other parts of Minnesota. The community-based partners delivering MFIP employment services are not immune to this slow recovery. The additional time will allow for WFS to deepen partnerships with community organizations and work in partnership with MFIP families to appropriately assess the needs of families.
- Effective March 1, 2026, the Diversionary Work Program is repealed. When this change occurs, families previously eligible for DWP will be eligible for MFIP. In preparation, the DWP staff will need to be transitioned to other employment service programs in the department. Retaining the current contractual relationships will support this transition rather than have multiple transitions occurring for MFIP families concurrently.
- By 2026, WFS will have had two years of a full family planner working collaboratively with other departments and community partners to integrate early childhood, financial counseling, well-being, and other whole family services to better support families with stability and transition to livable wage jobs.
- ARPA Learn and Earn investments will end 2026 but by the end of 2025 there will have been at least two years of Learn and Earn services with evaluation results which will help further inform future programming of MFIP employment services.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Extend the term of the Minnesota Family Investment Program Employment Service provider agreements for the period of January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.
2. Authorize the County Manager to execute amendments to the agreements in accordance with the county's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of available funding.
3. Authorize the County Manager to make temporary transfers, as needed, from the County General Fund to Workforce Solutions to cover program expenses until program funds are received, with repayment to be made upon receipt of the funds.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McGuire, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt.
Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Frethem, Martinson, McGuire, Ortega, Reinhardt, and Xiong

Absent: - 1: Moran

By: 

Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board