Request for Proposal

Texas State Independent Living Council (SILC) is a nonprofit organization that assists Texans with a disability to live as independently as they chose. Texas SILC is federally authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Workforce Innovation Act of 2014 and develops the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) that serves as a strategic plan to employ Independent Living Services.

Texas SILC has partnered with the Administration for Community Living (ACL) to provide quality of life grants over the next three years to community-based disability organizations serving people living with paralysis. For the purposes of this grant, the definition of paralysis refers to a range of disabling conditions due to stroke, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy or any central nervous system disorders that result in difficulty or the inability to move the upper or lower extremities. The goal of this pilot is to increase supports and services for Texans living with paralysis in rural and underserved areas of the State that will improve the opportunity to become more independent and integrated in the community of their choice.

Texas SILC is not a direct service provider and relies on community partners to provide directs services and supports for Texans with disabilities and fulfill the goals and objectives of the SPIL. Texas SILC has procured a telehealth-type platform (e.g. Zoom platform) and is searching for community-based organizations to provide virtual Independent Living Services to Texans living with paralysis in unserved or underserved areas of the State.

The Virtual Independent Living Services project will provide Texas community based organizations with vested interest in serving people living with paralysis the virtual platform to provide independent living services and supports. The virtual platform will provide Texans living with paralysis access to a secure, HIPPA compliant platform, to receive services and supports.

Individuals will be able to access this platform through a smart-phone application, tablet, computer, or by telephone. The goal of the virtual services platform is to bring services to hundreds of individuals living with paralysis that would have not otherwise been able to access Independent Living Services due to lack of transportation, accessible housing, and personal care attendant support. This platform should also provide social
interaction and support for people with paralysis who might be living with depression or other mental health issues. The virtual platform should offer greater access to independent living services to individuals and strengthen their network of peers and mentors.

The purpose of the project is to pilot and test the feasibility of providing Independent Living Services in a virtual service delivery model versus a traditional center-based or in-person structure. One-on-one meetings or small group discussions in a safe virtual space are a key component of the project. While creating a new video library of educational resources is an important tool, it is not the focus of this project. Small group discussions can occur within the scope of the project, but they should be live and interactive so Texans with paralysis can connect with peers, freely ask questions, and interact. If these small groups were recorded and made public, participation may be limited.

Specific examples of services that may be provided through virtual platform to Texans living with paralysis in unserved or underserved areas includes but are not limited to: peer support; employment and career development training; personal care attendant management; money management and personal finance; healthy eating and adaptive fitness exercises; civic engagement in and out of institutions, state-facilities, and nursing homes; assistive technology and the use of applications to assist in daily living activities and at work; travel support and training; leadership and development; self and systems advocacy methods; accessible housing and transportation options and rights; resources for parents with disabilities; support groups and discussion topics for caregivers and family members; service animal options and rights; and a host of other topics impacting Texans living with paralysis.

In the first year of the project, awards were provided to the following organizations:
- NMD United: NMD’s partnership expands the organizations virtual university by developing workgroups and individualized support that is facilitated by peer experts on topics relevant to those living with neuromuscular paralysis. The virtual university sessions are recorded and published on NMD United’s YouTube channel. VILS has provided the necessary funding to grow the Texas audience and employ expert facilitators and chapter administrators living with neuromuscular paralysis from Texas.
Empowering people with disabilities to live independently

- National Spinal Cord Injury Association Houston: United Spinal Association of Houston’s partnership has provided the expansion of virtual access to current programming related to peer mentoring and inclusive art and has afforded the opportunity for a confidential, online peer-to-peer discussion. Virtual peer support discussions include mental health, love, assistive technology, mobility, transportation, durable medical equipment, employment, and community resources and opportunities.

- Heart Of Central Texas Independent Living (HOCTIL): HOCTIL’s partnership increases supports and services for individuals living with paralysis in rural and underserved areas of Texas and improves their opportunity to become more independent, integrated in the community of their choice, and decreases isolation as they become better connected with peers. Virtual trainings are adapted from Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions, a proven self-management guide specifically for individuals with chronic conditions (paralysis), which consists of practical decision making tips, goal setting, and strategies to building resources and confidence in managing chronic symptoms, such as fatigue, pain, shortness of breath, disability, and depression.

More information about the project may be viewed on the Texas SILC’s Virtual Independent Living Services project webpage at https://www.txsilc.org/projects/vils.html

Awarded organizations selected through this request for proposal (RFP) will be required to use and gain competence in the telehealth-type platform to be provided. The specifics of training and proficiency expectations will be discussed and agreed to prior to award.

As part of the grant partnership, Texas SILC is committed to providing technical assistance and training on the tele-health platform. Texas SILC will provide each awarded organization a toolkit that explains in detail what both awarded organizations and participating Texans will need to know to effectively use and leverage the technology. The toolkit will include outreach materials, instructional videos, and troubleshooting support.

The Texas SILC is accepting proposals from community-based organizations that serve people living with paralysis to employ a virtual Independent Living Services to Texans with paralysis. Proposals can be submitted until 5:00pm
Central Standard Time, Friday, August 16, 2019, via email to VILS@txsilc.org.

Up to six community-based disability organizations will received up to $40,000 each to provide virtual Independent Living Services to Texans living with paralysis. All funds must be used in accordance to applicable federal laws and regulations.

An independent review panel will review all applications and make a recommendation for awards to the Texas SILC. Texas SILC will announce awards by 5:00pm Central Standard Time, Tuesday, August 27, 2019.

Project services must start Monday, September 2, 2019, and must be concluded Tuesday, June 30, 2019. Awardees must report performance and financial data that measure the impact and effectiveness of the award by Friday, July 31, 2020.

Texas SILC requests community partners willing to participate in the Virtual Independent Living Services project to complete a proposal that ensures the following project objectives and outcomes are achieved.

Project outcomes include:
- Texans with paralysis who live in unserved or underserved areas or represent an underserved population will have greater access to Independent Living Services in the environment they choose;
- Texans with paralysis will experience decreased isolation and will better connect with peers.
- The project will increase coalitions between community-based organizations that provide supports and services to Texans with paralysis;
- Texans with disabilities will have enhanced employment opportunities and have more strategies to thrive in the community of their choice.

Applicants interested in participating as a direct service provider in the project must submit a proposal that is no more than five single-spaced pages in Verdana 12-point font in Microsoft Word and respond to the following items:
1. Organization Background: please provide the name of your organization, organization address, Tax ID Number, name of contact person and contact information.
2. Narrative Description of the Project: please provide a narrative description of the type of virtual independent living services your organization plans to provide; milestones; how it will achieve project goals, objectives, and outcomes; and the data your organization will collect and report on that measures the impact and effectiveness of the award (e.g. Number of Texans living with paralysis who received an Independent Living Service). In this section, please include the purpose and scope of the project; location of work; describe the need for the project and solutions; deliverables that will be scheduled; and a timeline. Additional preference will be made for those community-based organizations that describe how the services are targeted to those populations listed in Section 3.2 of the SPIL. The SPIL may be viewed at the Texas SILC’s website: www.txsilc.org.

3. Capacity: please provide an overview of your organization, leadership and staff expertise, organizational ability to provide financial management and performance reporting. Please also provide a budget and budget justification for the project; type of payment schedule preferred (e.g. monthly; quarterly); and if and how the awarded funds will be used for travel.

Respondents are encouraged to provide as much detail in their proposals as possible regarding their community-based services in order to allow the independent review panel and the Texas SILC to accurately assess the best possible candidates. This is particularly valuable given the range of possible services responsive to this RFP.

Awarded organizations who receive an award up to $40,000 grant under this RFP will not be considered for subsequent awards under this grant.

This grant was supported in part by grant number 90PRRC0002 from The United States Administration on Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encourages to express freely their feeling and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, however, represent official Administration for Community Living policy.

Questions about this request for proposal must be submitted in writing via email to VILS@txsilc.org by 5:00pm Central Standard Time, Friday, June 28, 2019. All answers will be subsequently published on Texas SILC’s Virtual
Independent Living Services project webpage: https://www.txsilc.org/projects/vils.html

Texas SILC looks forward to developing new partnerships to increase supports and services for Texans living with paralysis living in underserved or unserved areas of the State. Additional Virtual Independent Living Services project funding opportunities may be available in the Winter of 2020.