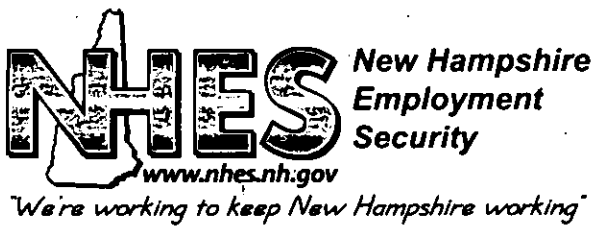


JOR



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
 45 SOUTH FRUIT STREET
 CONCORD, NH 03301-4857.



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GEORGE N. COPADIS, COMMISSIONER
 RICHARD J. LAVERS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

July 16, 2020

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
 And the Honorable Council
 State House
 Concord, NH 03301

INFORMATIONAL ITEM

Pursuant to RSA 4:45, RSA 21-P:43, and Executive Order 2020-04 as extended by Executive Orders 2020-05, 2020-08, 2020-09, 2020-10 and 2020-14, and suspension of Manual of Procedures 150, V, A, 3 requirement, Governor Sununu has authorized the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security (NHES) to enter into a **Sole Source** contract with Maximus Health Services, Inc. (VC 273259) of Reston, Virginia with a price limitation not to exceed \$4,317,395 for call center delivery and support services to individuals calling the unemployment compensation hotline, effective July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. 100% Other Funds.

Funds are available in the following account for State Fiscal Year 2021 with the authority to adjust between state fiscal years through the Budget Office, if needed and justified.

02-27-27-270010-8041	DEPT OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY	<u>SFY 2021</u>
10-02700-80410000-102-500731	Contracts for Program Services	\$4,317,395

EXPLANATION

This request is **Sole Source** because NHES in the interest of continuing to deliver essential customer service in connection with the delivery of critical financial assistance through expanded unemployment compensation benefits must enter into a contract for call center services. The selected vendor, Maximus Health Services, Inc. is uniquely positioned to immediately start providing services for workers here in New Hampshire.

Maximus is currently under contract with the Department of Health and Human Services for the provision of call support services related to various DHHS managed programs. Maximus is also currently providing call center support services for unemployment compensation call centers in both Vermont and Rhode Island. In speaking with both DHHS as well as Vermont, both are satisfied with the level of service from Maximus.

Prior to the spike in unemployment claim volume in March, NHES did not have the need for a call center. The volume of calls when the unemployment rate in the state was at 2.6% was able to be managed by existing staff in the NHES's offices located throughout the state. Since mid-March when the spike in unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic started, NHES has received over 223,000 new claims for unemployment benefits. Prior to the pandemic NHES was receiving 400-600 new claims per week. In the first week of the pandemic NHES received nearly 30,000 new claims.

In terms of weekly claim volume for claims that trigger the payment of unemployment benefits, NHES was receiving approximately 4,000 active claims per week prior to the pandemic. NHES is now currently just under 75,000 active claims per week and at one time had received over 116,000 active claims per week.

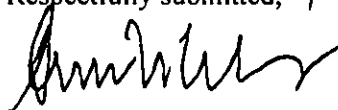
As a result of this sudden spike in unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of calls has skyrocketed. NHES has received over 550,000 telephone calls during these past four months. Fortunately, during this time NHES has received assistance from the New Hampshire National Guard together with volunteers from other state agencies. Due to the need to provide attention to other critical missions by the National Guard and the need for staff from other state agencies to return to their primary duties at those agencies, NHES now must transition to an outside private vendor for support. Considering the timing and logistical challenges around the staffing of a congregated call center fully staffed by state employees, NHES decided to seek outside support.

The reason for the emergency nature of this request is based upon the need to rapidly transition to vendor support in order to allow the National Guard to transition to other critical missions. This together with the need to allow the state facilities which we have been occupying throughout the pandemic to house these call centers, including the Fire Academy, the Edward Cross Training Complex and the Department of Transportation's Morton building, to return to their original intended functions and purposes.

The total not to exceed cost of the emergency contract is \$4,317,395 for call center support through December 31, 2020. The vendor will provide the telecommunications infrastructure and up to 80 customer service agents to be the first line of communication for calls received on the Unemployment Hotline. Calls unable to be resolved at the first tier by the vendor and calls where the customer selects an option only capable of being handled by NHES staff will then be escalated to NHES.

NHES is confident based upon the past record demonstrated by Maximus that we will continue to be able to provide exceptional customer service support to the people of New Hampshire in need of services through the Unemployment Hotline.

Respectfully submitted, /



George N. Copadis
Commissioner