



Dane County Department of Human Services

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TO: Dane County Board, Health and Human Needs Committee

FROM: John Schlueter, Director of Dane County Department of Human Services
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DATE: March 5, 2026

SUBJECT: 2027 Bid Waivers and Requests for Proposals (RFP)

This memo provides an overview of the Dane County Department of Human Services' (DCDHS) procurement process and a summary of its bid waiver requests for contract year 2027.

Over the past several years DCDHS has continued to make more critical choices about our use of bid waivers versus RFPs, choosing to put more programs out for competitive procurement through RFP. This year continues that trend.

Decision-Making Process: RFP vs. Bid Waiver

Each fall, DCDHS reviews programs provided through contracted vendors and decides if the program should continue as-is or needs modification to meet community needs. Then, DCDHS managers determine which programs and services require a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) and which may qualify for a bid waiver. Under Dane County ordinance, contracts for program and services may be renewed annually for up to five years, after which formal procurement is required. For DCDHS POS contracts, this typically takes the form of either an RFP or a bid waiver.

Internally, staff review contracts entering their fifth year of programming in the upcoming calendar year and recommend the appropriate procurement approach. In the current cycle, DCDHS applied increased scrutiny to bid waiver requests that include General Purpose Revenue (GPR) to promote consistent procurement practices, support long-term fiscal sustainability, and maintain a competitive and transparent POS environment.

In early December 2025, DCDHS leadership and contract managers met to review each program and confirm the recommended procurement approach. This discussion allowed for careful consideration of alternative bid waiver justifications in light of the unique nature of DCDHS services and the evolving policy environment. As a result, DCDHS is requesting 10 bid waivers for contract year 2027.

Bid Waiver Authority

Per Dane County Ordinances 25.08(18)(b), the Controller or the Dane County Board’s Personnel & Finance (P&F) Committee may waive the requirement for competitive bids under certain circumstances:

1. Only one vendor possesses the unique and singular ability to meet the County’s requirements;
2. Unique and specific technical qualifications, the ability to deliver at a particular time, or services from a public utility are required;
3. When a special adaptation for a special purpose is required;
4. When a unique or opportune buying condition exists.

These exceptions are broad, allowing for discretion in their application. DCDHS intentionally avoids relying on the first justification whenever possible.

2027 Bid Waiver Overview

The full bid waiver forms have been provided to HHN and P&F. Below is a condensed summary for the convenience of HHN committee members.

	Summary	Provider	Yearly Amount	TOTAL
Justification: Unique and specific technical qualifications, the ability to deliver at a particular time, or services from a public utility are required				
1	DCDHS contracts with this provider as well as the other geographically practical youth crisis facility for these services; competitive procurement would not yield additional vendors.	Lad Lake, Inc.	\$26,700	\$133,500 (5 yr)
2	This one-year waiver will align the procurement timelines for the two providers currently offering this service. With the programs on a common schedule, the Dept can then conduct a single competitive process, if appropriate. The current service model involves client-specific design and negotiated rates that don’t align cleanly with the Dept’s standard unit-based pricing structures.	Dungarvin	\$702,183	\$702,183 (1 yr)
3	DCDHS partners with Briarpatch to perform an administrative function of issuing work permits and paychecks for youth that the County employs thru a youth employment program. Much of the contract amount is wages, payroll taxes, and the cost of the work permit. This arrangement benefits the County and a competitive procurement could end the partnership.	Briarpatch	\$30,000	\$150,000 (5 yr)
4	This FSET partnership is written into an agreement between DCDHS and Wisconsin DHS, and DHS competitively procured this	Forward Service Corp	\$2,407,118	\$12,035,592 (5 year)

	service. An additional competitive procurement would be duplicative of DHS efforts and altering the existing agreement would possibly make DCDHS out of compliance.			
5	The services funded under this contract were competitively selected through the federal HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) grant process rather than through a County-issued solicitation.	Housing Initiatives Inc	\$1,821,099	\$9,105,495 (5 years)
6	Program relies on a time-sensitive and specialized service model that cannot be reasonably replicated through a competitive procurement without risking service gaps during peak winter months	Arbor ET	\$68,800	\$344,000 (5 years)
7	DCDHS administers CCOP through CLTS providers, which provides program and fiscal efficiencies for county and residents. CLTS is selected through a WI DHS application/review process.	Professional Services Group, Inc	\$10,000	\$50,000 (5 years)
Justification: When special adaptation for a special purpose is required				
8	DCDHS acting as pass-thru/fiscal admin for a grant project among multiple partners where competitive procurement would hinder partnership and grant outcomes.	Tellurian, Inc.	\$70,000	\$350,000 (5 year)
Justification: When a unique or opportune buying condition exists				
9	The services provided under this contract rely on a volunteer-based delivery model that cannot be reasonably replicated through a competitive procurement.	RSVP of Dane County Inc.	\$513,982	\$2,569,910 (5 year)
10	50-50 programs whereby providers use their own funds to draw down federal match. The amount of these contracts is the federal pass-through.	Multiple	\$578,781	\$2,893,905 (5 year)

In addition to the 10 bid waivers attached to this memo, DCDHS intends to conduct approximately 25 competitive procurements through the annual RFP process. These RFPs will be posted on Dane County's Procurement Portal OpenGov, announced through public notice in the Wisconsin State Journal, advertised in local publications such as Madison 365, and sent out via email announcements to several hundred agencies in April. Applicants will have until May or early June to submit proposals to the Department. All complete proposals received by the application date are reviewed by a committee of at least three people and are evaluated based on criteria detailed in each RFP. This review is typically completed by early to mid-July and allows time for DCDHS to interview applicants or request best and final offers or supplemental information, if needed. The Department begins to draft contracts for all programs, including those solicited through the annual RFP process, in September. The procurement process is a significant and important process, involving a substantial amount of time from many DCDHS employees.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide this update on its procurement procedures for the Health and Human Needs Committee, and looks forward to the continual improvement of this process. We remain committed to providing a fair procurement process in order to continue provision of top-notch services to the residents of Dane County.