



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR

An Evaluator of Rhode Island's On-Ramps to Career Pathways Initiative

Funded Through

The United States Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation Fund

RFP Issued:

July 31, 2012

Proposal Due Date:

August 29, 2012

Lincoln D. Chafee, Governor

State of Rhode Island

Charles J. Fogarty, Director

Department of Labor and Training

RFP SUMMARY

Submit To: Mr. David Tremblay
Administrator
Re: WIF Grant – On-Ramps to Career Pathways Initiative
Department of Labor and Training
State Workforce Investment Office
1511 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920

Services: Evaluation of Workforce Innovation Fund Grant Activities

Contract Type: Cost Reimbursement

Contract Term: October 16, 2012 – June 30, 2015

RFP Contact: Mr. David Tremblay
dtremblay@dlt.ri.gov
(401) 462-8812

INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, who is serving as the grant administrator for the *On-Ramps to Career Pathways* grant (Department of Labor funded grants under the Workforce Innovation Fund), is seeking an entity to serve as the third party independent evaluator for the grant. The technical proposal, approved by the Department of Labor, and related documents can be viewed at the following website: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/wio/>

Rhode Island intends to test the hypotheses that organizing workforce services through a targeted on-ramps system to career pathways results in better outcomes for customers and employers, creates greater system efficiencies and incentivizes greater private training investments. The evidence for the effectiveness of the individual strategies is strong yet preliminary, and is primarily found in the outcomes reported by programs. The proposed evaluation strategy must be of appropriate rigor and should consist of at least collection and analysis of process, output and outcome data and a rigorous method to evaluate impact.

The evaluation period will be approximately 33 months which includes all necessary implementation and start-up activities as well as grant close-out activities and the completion of the evaluation of the initiative.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rhode Island submitted a preliminary evaluation plan with its grant proposal that proposed the use of both formative and summative evaluation methods to test the On-Ramps to Career Pathways Initiative. Applicants should review this evaluation plan as well as the original grant proposal as a basis for their proposed technical plans, and propose a more complete and detailed evaluation plan that meets the following criteria:

- 1) The proposed evaluation is of an appropriate level of rigor for project type A as described in Section I.D. of the SGA/DFA PY-11-05 – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 17.283.
- 2) Key sections taken from the SGA to be considered in your response are:
 - The proposed evaluation provides a detailed plan for rigorously evaluating the program, including a complete description of the study methodology and data collection methods. It should provide information about comparison groups if applicable to the proposed evaluation. If you are proposing a comparison group methodology, you must fully explain the source of the comparison group; how the comparison group will be drawn from it, including showing that data on both the comparison group and the program participant group will be from compatible sources (e.g., based on the same questionnaire); and any selection bias issues.

- The evaluation plan must fully explain how the proposed program evaluation will provide knowledge that can be used to enhance the broader workforce system.
- 3) The proposal must fully address the recommendations for evaluation plan improvement provided by the ETA and Abt Associates
 - 4) The evaluator will be expected to work with the leadership and project implementation team to make smart and thoughtful decisions about methodology, weighing benefits and costs to find the most suitable overall plan. The evaluator will also be expected to solicit input and buy-in about the evaluation design from stakeholders, administrators, colleagues, and other individuals who will be responsible for project implementation.

The U.S. Department of Labor has also provided a National Evaluation Coordinator (NEC) to assist all third-party evaluators in finalizing evaluation designs. The contractor will coordinate and review all third party, independent evaluations of the WIF grants including that which is submitted by the selected evaluator for Rhode Island's On-Ramps to Career Pathways Initiative. The NEC will compile all final evaluation designs, monitor each evaluation's progress; work with the grantees and their evaluators to ensure the progress of each evaluation towards achieving its goals and objectives and resolve any issues that arise in implementing their evaluation plans; and gather all analyses and reports completed by the third party evaluators and ensuring all final products are completed in a timely manner. Selected evaluators are expected to:

- (1) **Attend virtual quarterly webinars.** Abt Associates will deliver evaluation and data technical assistance through hour-long quarterly webinars. The webinars will be designed to provide guidance on issues and problems commonly faced in evaluations and address topics, frequently asked questions and problems from WIF evaluators. The webinars will also provide data-related guidance.
- (2) **Attend two WIF collaboration events** – In collaboration with the Department of Labor and the WIF TA provider, Abt Associates will host two in-person WIF events. The first of these will be a two-day orientation event which will occur in late October, 2012. The second collaboration event will occur at the end of the grant period to discuss evaluation findings and provide the grantees with an opportunity to present how they hope to use the lessons and knowledge that they have learned regarding evaluation implementation in future activities. Evaluators should allow for two days for the second collaboration event.
- (3) **Participate in the WIF communication platforms.** Abt Associates will be establishing communication platforms to facilitate communication with and among WIF third-party evaluators. The communications platforms will allow evaluators to exchange large documents, briefing slides, and datasets in real time with the National Evaluation Coordinator and with one another – when appropriate. Furthermore, the platforms will provide an opportunity for Abt Associates to provide

timely information to evaluators and for evaluators to have peer-to-peer discussions with one another and with the NEC on evaluation-related topics.

(4) Submit the following deliverables:

- a. **Evaluation Design** – Third-party evaluators will prepare and submit a final evaluation design to the NEC by mid-December 2012. The evaluator must work with the NEC to make any necessary changes to the evaluation design that would strengthen the evaluation. The evaluation design will be resubmitted to the NEC as needed.
- b. **Data** – Third-party evaluators will collect and supply to the NEC the data collected for the evaluation as well as a data dictionary.
- c. **Final Report** – Evaluators will submit the final evaluation report to the NEC.

Note again that costs for travel to meetings related to the national evaluation should be included in this proposal; they will not be provided through the national evaluator.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING EVALUATOR

The Department of Labor and Training will assemble a team of reviewers who will read and score the proposals and make recommendations to the Director of the Department of Labor and Training, who has the final authority to select the evaluator. Please see page 9 for a description of the process.

Criteria that will be used by the Department of Labor and Training include:

1. Have experience in conducting rigorous evaluations in the area of workforce development and working with similar levels of resources.
2. Is familiar with workforce evaluation literature and practice.
3. Have the ability to deliver a full range of program evaluation activities including research design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and dissemination of the results.
4. Is willing to work collaboratively to develop an evaluation plan that meets the needs of the project.
5. Is able to communicate in simple, practical terms.
6. Understands and considers cultural and socio- economic differences.
7. Has the time available to do the evaluation.
8. Will treat data confidentially.

PROJECT EVALUATION BUDGET AND NARRATIVE

The proposal must include an evaluation budget and narrative. The budget should be a line item budget that includes costs for: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Instrumentation and Data Validation, Materials and Supplies, and Indirect Charges (capped at 10%). The budget narrative must clearly specify the staff who will be dedicated to the project and the amount of time budgeted for each staff person. The budget narrative must provide a description of the costs associated with funding the proposed program

evaluation component. All costs included in the budget narrative must be reasonable and appropriate to the project timeline and deliverables. The maximum amount available is \$412,000. All budgets will be evaluated on the basis of cost-effectiveness in relation to the provision of consistent, high-quality services.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMISSION

Eligible Bidders and Subcontractors

Proposing organizations may be public, private or not-for-profit entities.

Format Requirements

Each proposal must contain all required documents identified and physically adhere to the following:

- Must be printed on 8.5" x 11" plain white paper
- Must be single spaced in 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font
- Each page must have a one-inch margin
- Each page must be single sided
- Pages must be sequentially numbered
- Must submit one (1) original proposal marked "Original" and manually signed by officials authorized to represent and bind applicants
- Include ten (10) copies and one (1) pdf of the entire proposal emailed to dtremblay@dlt.ri.gov. The files must be compatible with Microsoft Word and Excel.

Proposal Components

- Proposal Cover Form (see page 10)
- Table of contents
- Executive summary – Limited to two (2) pages
- Proposal Narrative – Limited to fifteen (15) pages
- Budget narrative - Limited to five (5) pages
- Three references from former project evaluations with a brief description of the evaluation that was conducted
- Attachments
 - Evaluation Team Organizational Chart
 - Resumes of Key Staff
 - For non-profit organizations only:
 - List of board of directors, officers and their affiliations.
 - Most recent audited financial statement for your organization.
 - IRS Determination Letter indicating your tax-exempt status and tax identification number, if applicable.

Submission

DLT must receive all sealed proposals no later than 12:00 p.m. EST, August 29, 2012. Regardless of postmark or arrival, (if hand delivered), proposals received after the due date and time will not be

considered. Proposals may be submitted by U.S. mail, other mail carrier services, or hand delivered. Faxed or e-mailed proposals will NOT be accepted. Untimely proposals are not eligible for appeal. The applicant is solely responsible for assuring that everything sent to DLT arrive completely, legibly and on time.

Deliver proposals to:

David Tremblay
Department of Labor and Training
State Workforce Investment Office
1511 Pontiac Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

Questions

Please note that procurement policies mandate that staff of the Department of Labor and Training will not be allowed to discuss the RFP, but questions are allowed and must be submitted via e-mail, no later than 12:00 p.m. Noon EST on August 8, 2012 . Please note “WIF Evaluation RFP Question” in the subject line of the e-mail and submit to dtremblay@dlt.ri.gov. All questions and answers will be posted to the following website: www.dlt.ri.gov/WIO by August 10, 2012.

RFP Timeline

July 31, 2012	Release RFP
August 8, 2012	Questions Due
August 10, 2012	All questions answered
August 29, 2012	Proposals Due
September 4-5, 2012	Proposal Review
September 11-14, 2012	Interviews
September 17, 2012	Recommendations to the Department of Labor and Training
September 17 – October 16.2012	Contract Negotiations
October 16, 2012	Contract Begins

Please note: Interested bidders should reserve September 11-14 for in-person interviews. The Department of Labor and Training will contact bidders by September 6 to notify the time and date of the interviews.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process will include the following steps:

1. Staff from agencies participating in the initiative will review each proposal to ensure that they meet the mandatory requirements.
2. Proposals that complete minimum proposal requirements will be distributed to the review team for scoring. The minimum proposal requirements consist of :

- Submitted on time;
 - Signed by the signatory authority of the respondent organization;
 - Respondent is not debarred, suspended, or voluntarily excluded from receipt of federal funds;
 - Proposal is appropriately formatted as provided in this RFP.
3. All proposals will be read and scored by each review team member. The review team committee will meet to discuss and work to establish a recommendation for funding.
 4. The selected proposal will be recommended to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training on September 17, 2012.

Proposal Cover Form and Summary

Please complete the Cover Form below and provide a brief summary of your proposed evaluation plan. The Cover form must be signed by an official authorized to submit the Proposal.

Lead Organization:	
FEIN:	
Address:	
Name of Authorized Official/Title:	
Telephone:	
Fax:	
E-mail Address:	
Proposal Contact Person/Title:	
Telephone:	
Fax:	
E-mail Address:	
Summary of Proposed Evaluation Plan:	

The authorized official from the lead fiscal agency must sign both the application and the contract. This person must also be listed as the "AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL" in the Contact Information section of the Cover Form. I certify that all information contained in this proposal is true and accurate and understand that falsification of information may be cause for non-review or award revocation. I certify that the applicant organization is in compliance with all contributions, payment in lieu of contributions, interest or penalty charges due under Rhode Island unemployment law, in good standing with Workforce Regulation and Safety and has not been debarred from contracting with any agency that administers Federal funds.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

Proposal Narrative Requirements

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the proposal and congruence with the goals and criteria of this Request for Proposals. The narrative portion of the proposal (not counting the budget narrative) must be **no more than 15 pages**, single-spaced, in 12-point font. Assemble your proposal narrative in the order in which each requirement is presented below.

PART ONE: EVALUATION DESIGN
1. Approach to the evaluation (35 points)
<p>Please provide a more advanced evaluation plan, using the original plan as a basis, in sufficient detail. Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your approach to the summative and formative evaluations. Applicants are encouraged to provide unique and creative solutions that may vary from the original plan. ▪ Recommendations for improvements to the logic model and other intervention-related alterations that would make evaluation more feasible while not substantially changing the nature of the intervention. ▪ Specific data collection plan and tools, including a discussion of the current plan for follow-up on participants and a discussion of other possible strategies for effective follow up. Available administrative data sources from the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training include but may not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geographic Solutions Virtual One Stop System (EmployRI): confidentiality agreement required. ▪ Detail your analytical methods and include a discussion of why those methods are appropriate. Include a discussion of the specific software you will use and its applicability. ▪ The methods you would propose to account for the possible bias in the self-selection process in a comparison group study (if selected) and what strategies would you use to address this problem.
2. Process to refine and customize the plan (5 points)
Please describe the process you would use to work collaboratively with the National Evaluation Coordinator and other key stakeholders to refine and customize your proposed plan to ensure that it meets the needs of the project.
3. Analysis of challenges (10 points)
Please identify the three main challenges in the design of this evaluation and explain how you would address them, and include a description of experience you have had with similar challenges and the outcome of that work.
4. Literature review (5 points)

Please include a brief literature review (no more than two pages) relevant to this evaluation with regard to scholarly evidence surrounding career pathways initiatives.		
PART TWO: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE		
5. Organizational Description and Qualifications (5 points)		
Provide a concise description of your organization, its areas of expertise, and history.		
6. Evaluation Capacity (20 points)		
Please demonstrate that your organization has the capacity to deliver a full range of program evaluation activities including research design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and dissemination of the results. Discuss your experience with evaluating workforce development projects, outlining specific projects and including a brief description of the evaluation approach for those projects. Include information on evaluation projects (both workforce and otherwise) with similar designs.		
7. Staffing (20 points)		
Using the table below, provide a description of all staff that will be responsible for implementing the evaluation plan and the responsibilities they will have. Add more rows as needed. Please attach bios of key staff along with an organizational chart that depicts the evaluation team you would assign to this project.		
Staff Person Name and Title	Role/Responsibilities	Past Experience with Workforce Development or Similar Design Evaluations

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Governing Authority

Acceptable proposals must meet the specifications contained in SGA/DFA PY-11-05 – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 17.283 and all applicable statutes, regulations, policies and procedures. It is the applicant’s responsibility to familiarize themselves with these and other relevant documents and any subsequent changes.

Type of Contract

The contract(s) awarded through this RFP will be cost reimbursement only. For the purpose of this RFP, applicants must develop a budget defining anticipated costs associated with the delivery of the proposed service plan.

Funding

DLT will make funding available from the Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund as authorized under Department of Labor ETA - SGA/DFA PY-11-05 – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Applicant responses must include a reasonable total cost for delivering the services described in this RFP.

Funding Period

The funding period for contract(s) awarded under this RFP is from October 16, 2012 through June 30, 2015, provided service provider performance remains acceptable during this period.

Financial Capability

Applicants must:

- Maintain fiscal controls, accounting procedures and financial reporting in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles,
- Demonstrate sound financial practices, and
- Provide evidence of continued financial stability.

Applicants must keep separate accounting records to ensure accurate and appropriate reporting of contract expenditures. Costs must be tracked in sufficient detail to determine compliance with contract requirements and ensure funds are being and have been lawfully spent. Successful applicants will be required to submit all appropriate documents to identify their policies and procedures to assure compliance.

THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE LOCATED ON THE DLT WEBSITE:

1. Rhode Island Response to the Workforce Innovation Fund Solicitation
 - Abstract
 - Technical Proposal
 - Logic Model
 - Memorandum of Understanding
 - Budget and budget narrative
 - Evaluation Proposal
2. Evaluation Plan Improvement Guide from the US Department of Labor for RIDLT
3. Sample Confidentiality Agreement
4. Workforce Innovation Fund Solicitation # SGA/DFA PY-11-05

INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS TO OFFERORS:

- Potential offerors are advised to review all sections of this Request carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.

- Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals which depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of work defined by this Request will be rejected as being non-responsive.
- All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this Request, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content shall be borne by the offeror. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.
- Proposals are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than sixty (60) days following the opening date, and may not be withdrawn, except with the express written permission of the Department of Labor and Training.
- All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
- Proposals misdirected to other State locations or which are otherwise not present in the Department of Labor and Training at the time of opening for any cause will be determined to be late and may not be considered. The "Official" time clock is in the reception area of the Department of Labor and Training.
- In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.1 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no foreign corporation shall have the right to transact business in the state until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). This will be a requirement only of the successful bidder(s).
- Offerors are advised that all materials submitted to the State of Rhode Island for consideration in response to this Request for Proposals will be considered to be public record, as defined in Title 38 Chapter 2 of the Rhode Island General Laws, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request, once an award has been made.
- It is intended that an award pursuant to this Request will be made to a prime contractor, who will assume responsibility for all aspects of the work. Joint venture and cooperative proposals will not be considered, but subcontracts are permitted, provided that their use is clearly indicated in the offeror's proposal, and the subcontractor(s) proposed to be used are identified in the proposal.

- Selection of a bidder for this award does not constitute approval of the application as submitted. Before the actual contract is executed, we may enter into negotiations about such items as staffing and funding levels, etc.
- The State reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request or to cancel in part or its entirety this RFP, if it is in the best interest of the State to do so. In addition, the State reserves the right to waive any and all requirements of the RFP.
- The State reserves the right not to fund any proposal solely due to the submission of the lowest cost or receipt of the highest ranking. All contract awards are subject to the availability of Federal funds and the execution of a contract that is acceptable to both the selected respondent and the State.
- The State of Rhode Island has a goal of ten percent (10%) participation by Minority Business Enterprise's (MBE) in all State procurements. For further information, visit the website www.rimbe.org . To speak with an M.B.E. Officer, call (401) 457-8253.
- Any respondent who has submitted a response to this RFP may appeal an award announcement. The process for appealing an award is as follows:

All protests, appeals or complaints must be submitted in writing to the Department of Labor and Training within five (5) working days of the award announcement addressed to the Administrator of the State Workforce Investment Office for review and to determine merit. In order for an appeal to be found to have merit it must show that a substantial portion of the RFP process or Federal procurement guidelines was violated. Only appeals that cite the specific section(s) of the RFP that have been violated will be considered.

If protests, appeals or complaints are found to have merit, the appeal will be evaluated by the Director of the Department of Labor and Training. The decision made by the Director of DLT will be final.

Appeals received after the established deadline will not be accepted. Appeals may not dispute a particular score received by the petitioning agency, or the scores assigned to a competing agency. The scores awarded are final and are not subject to question by an appealing agency.

- Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Department of Labor and Training web site on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP.

- Equal Employment Opportunity (RIGL 28-5.1)
§ 28-5.1-1 Declaration of policy. – (a) Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies in all areas where the state dollar is spent, in employment, public service, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation. For further information, contact the Rhode Island Equal Employment Opportunity Office, at 222-3090.