

Workforce Education Cluster Centers
Pre-Bid Conference Recap
2:00 PM; January 20, 2005

The pre-bid conference for the ‘Workforce Education Cluster Centers’ RFP was held as scheduled at the offices of Workforce Florida, Inc. WFI staff briefly discussed the program requirements and the process for submitting proposals as described in the solicitation. This was a ‘non-mandatory’ pre-bid conference and those prospective respondents who were unable to attend are eligible to submit a proposal. Attendees were reminded that this written pre-bid conference recap, distributed simultaneously via email to all known recipients and posted on the WFI web site, provides the ‘official’ WFI responses to all questions raised prior to and during the pre-bid conference.

Following is a list of attendees at the conference:

| ATTENDEE | REPRESENTING |
|----------------------|---|
| Ursula Brown | Taylor County |
| Chris Olsen | “ |
| Mike Deming | North Florida Workforce Development Board |
| Clark Bonilla | Miami Dade College |
| Tom Langkau | Brevard Workforce Development Board |
| Terrance Moore | Moore Solutions |
| Mark Van Vleet | Career Institute of Florida |
| Susie Pontiff | Florida Community College at Jacksonville |
| Phyllis Renninger | “ |
| J. B. Renninger | “ |
| Theophilos Mantzanas | North Florida Community College |
| Andra Cornelius | Workforce Florida, Inc. |
| Jayne Burgess | “ |
| Mike Johnson | “ |

1. Project Overview:

Andra Cornelius, WFI Vice President for Business Outreach, provided attendees a brief project overview.

The Governor’s Roadmap to Florida’s Future, introduced in January 2004, is the state’s strategic plan for economic development. One of the strategic priorities in the plan is to raise the bar for excellence in education and workforce. A specific goal relating to this priority is to design a statewide system of regionally concentrated and industry-driven workforce education cluster centers. This competitive RFP was drafted to be directly responsive to this goal. Respondents are encouraged to review this section of the Roadmap at <http://www.eflorida.com/strategicplan/>. Although entirely funded through Workforce Investment Act funds through Workforce Florida, Inc., respondents are public or private training entities. To ensure that both Florida’s training providers and federal workforce funds are working together in partnership toward this strategic goal, respondents are required to describe how they will leverage funds in their responses.

2. Procedural issues:

- Respondents must use the format included in Attachment II for their proposal. DO NOT use any kind of binders or other elaborate proposal covers, etc. – there are no points for ‘style.’
- Limit responses to 20 pages
- Proposals will be rated by a five-person committee. The rating process will be administered by the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI). AWI will forward the rating findings to WFI which will make award decisions. Award decisions will consider the findings of the raters but may not be based solely on those findings (see Section 9.0 of the RFP).
- It is anticipated that there will be only three projects awarded as a result of this RFP. Respondents are reminded that it is WFI’s intent to award at least one rural project (see Section 2.0, top of Page 2.). Due to the limited amount of funds available and WFI’s intent to limit the number of projects that will be funded, some good projects will invariably not get funded.
- Award notices will be emailed to ALL respondents by AWI and posted on the WFI & AWI web sites on or about the date indicated in the RFP (February 23). Award notices will be issued to the ‘contact person’ listed in Attachment I of the proposal. February 23 is only an *anticipated* award date; actual awards may be made later than February 23, maybe even significantly later. If a respondent has not received an email award notice, that means the award has not been finalized. PLEASE DO NOT CALL questioning award status.
- Potential respondents are reminded that Workforce Florida, Inc. is subject to Florida public records laws which means that all materials associated with this RFP, including proposals, are ‘public records’.
- Proposals are to be submitted to the Agency for Workforce Innovation – *not* to WFI – as prescribed in Section 14.0. No faxes or email responses are allowed. Proposals must be received by AWI by 5:00 PM, Eastern, on February 11.
- Staff reminded attendees that local ‘collaboration’ and the ‘leveraging of funds’ are important issues and proposals should address these two issues in detail where called for.
- WFI will enter into two-party contracts commencing upon execution and expiring on 6/30/06. If a consortium (a multi-party entity) is organized for this project, one of the organizations must be designated the lead agency and it will be with that lead agency only that WFI will contract.

NOTE: Staff clarified for attendees the WIA eligibility issue for persons that will be served under contracts resulting from this RFP. The persons eligible to be served are ADULTS, 18 years of age or older, who are U.S. citizens or authorized by INS to work in the U.S. If the person is male and aged 18 – 26, that person must be registered with the Selective Service. If the person is male and older than 26 and was not registered with the Selective Service, the person must have an advisory opinion letter from the Selective Service stating that the person did not willfully and knowingly fail to register.

The ‘Dislocated Worker’ and ‘Youth’ eligibility criteria listed in Attachment A of the RFP, **DO NOT** apply to persons to be served under this initiative – just the above criteria regarding age, citizenship and Selective Service registration apply.

The contractors selected as a result of this RFP will be required to obtain and maintain documentation that meets these minimal eligibility requirements.

Persons being served (trained) under this initiative can be persons already working for an employer in the industry (employed worker) or can be a job seeker trying to obtain employment in the industry.

3. Questions/Answers:

Q. Does the program reimburse based on completers only?

A. The contracts resulting from this RFP will include, at a minimum, the services or ‘deliverables’ listed in Section 7.0. Based on the proposals that are awarded there may be other services included as payables under the contract. It is anticipated that the actual enrollment, completion and placement of trainees (placements wouldn’t apply to employed workers) are payable services that will come toward the end of the contract period and that some of the early payable services will be the involvement of businesses and curriculum development.

Q. Will the program reimburse for completers that are enrolled by 6/30/06 but complete after that date?

A. No. Contracts will be structured to provide for the payment of enrollments up to and including 6/30/06 but any enrollments that are paid late in the contract may not be eligible for a ‘completion’ payment unless the completion is also accrued on or before 6/30/06. Contracts will not pay for any services that accrue before or after the contract term.

Q. Section 6.2 states that in addition to the industries listed in Attachment B (EFI targeted industries list), “other industries of local importance” may be targeted. Does that mean that an industry that is not listed in Attachment B can be selected for the career cluster center?

A. Yes, industries that are not listed in Attachment B may be submitted. If a respondent intends to select an ‘alternate’ industry (one not listed in Attach B). the proposal should address local labor market statistical data or other local business information that provides a convincing argument for the selection.

Q. Can a proposal address more than one industry?

A. No. Due to the limitations on funding and time, WFI requires that proposals be limited to one industry.

Q. Is the only eligible group of persons to be served under this initiative to be WIA Youth?

A. No. See NOTE in red above.

Q. Must proposals be received by 5:00 on 2/11 or is a 2/11 postmark date acceptable?

A. Must be **received** by AWI by that date & time.

Q. Is a county-wide economic development organization eligible to respond to this RFP?

A. Yes.

Q. Will WFI construct the contracts similar to grants with regional workforce boards where 80% of the funds are released upfront and 20% withheld until certain performances are accrued?

A. No. Two party, performance-based contracts that WFI uses with outside providers vary greatly from grants that are awarded to regional workforce boards. The contracts for this initiative will require the delivery of very specific services in order for payments to be made (see question above). As an example, if one of the payables is the enrollment of 100 persons into a program(s) and the contractor only successfully enrolls 75, the contractor would only be paid for the 75. Under ‘performance-based’ contracts there is no payment for ‘effort’; only ‘results.’

Q. If there is program income as mentioned in Section 13.10, are there restrictions on how it can be used to provide additional services?

A. Program income must be reported to WFI at which time WFI will approve/disapprove its use for providing additional services. An example of an acceptable use of program income is to serve more persons than originally specified.

Q. What kind of documentation is acceptable for leveraged funds?

A. WFI will be looking for the commitment to provide either cash or in-kind services in a letter from the organization providing the cash or in-kind services and signed by an officer from that organization. In-kind services must include a description of the service, the value (how much is the donation worth) and some brief explanation as to how that value was determined.

Q. Are there any restrictions on what can be counted as leveraged, in-kind services?

A. No, as long as the services relate to this specific project and as long as the value issue is addressed. As an example, staff mentioned to attendees that if a \$500 piece of equipment is donated, it should not be valued at \$5,000. Also, staff mentioned that such things as employee wages, use of the businesses premises or equipment for training, providing technical materials could all be considered in-kind services.

Q. Will out-of-state customers be allowed?

A. The businesses or industries that are served must be in Florida. Several people mentioned that some businesses in the northernmost part of Florida have employees who may actually live in Georgia or Alabama. Those persons could be trained as long as the businesses they work for are in Florida.

Q. Will WFI be providing formatted budget sheets?

A. No.

Q. How will the fixed payable amounts be established? Will the payments for the services mentioned in Section 7.0 be based on the costs to provide those services?

A. Payment amounts will be determined during the contract negotiation process. These are performance-based contracts – **not reimbursement contracts** – so payable amounts are not directly related to contractor program costs. Staff mentioned that generally when developing payable amounts, or unit prices, that include such services as enrollments, completions & placements, enrollments will normally be paid at a lesser rate than completions and completions paid at a lesser rate than placements – using a graduated payment scale like that gives greater value to completions compared to enrollments and still greater value to placements than either completions or enrollments.

Q. If cluster center curriculum is intended to serve national customers through the internet and/or virtual learning, will there be eligibility requirements for out-of-state customers?

A. See answer above RE: out-of-state customers. Web-based training is mentioned in the RFP as a possible mechanism for rolling out training for businesses that may not be able to send employees to a school for training or for job seekers who may not have the ability to attend traditional classroom training.

Q. If a contractor intends to obtain eligibility or data input services from a regional board, must it still be trained by AWI as mentioned in 13.9?

A. No.

Q. How does WFI define an industry? Can it be one of the broad categories such as ‘manufacturing facilities’ or ‘information industries’ or must it be one of the individual subsets under those categories such as ‘chemical manufacturing’ or ‘on-line information services.’

A. It can be either. If a respondent intends to use the broad category of say manufacturing facilities, there needs to be some natural relationship between local employers in that broad category or the curriculum development and actual training would be so general as to be of no benefit to those local businesses (recall the mention above about limiting proposals to one industry).

Q. If a respondent hand delivers its proposal, will a stamped receipt be provided?

A. AWI will attempt to ensure that anyone that hand delivers a proposal package is given a receipt of some sort if requested.

Q. Can a community college use its federally negotiated indirect rate as documentation for leveraged funds?

A. No. WFI is seeking a level of detail sufficient to document the specific resources that will be provided by colleges as leveraged funds **to this project**. Such things as space, staff, equipment, etc. or portions thereof that are donated to this initiative could serve as provider leveraged funds. Obviously, if the provider is claiming such items as leveraged funds, the funds from this project could not pay for those items. As an example, if a provider planned to hire a teacher for the project at \$40,000 and was going to pay for that teacher from another funding source, the \$40,000 could be claimed as ‘leveraged’ funds. Or, for that same teacher, if \$20,000 was going to be paid from another source and \$20,000 from this project, the \$20,000 paid from the other source could be claimed as leveraged funds.

Q. Is an employer giving employees paid time off to take training considered leveraged funds?

A. Yes

Q. Would WFI like to see the training provided by a private provider licensed by the Commission on Independent Education?

A. Private providers must be licensed by the CIE and having CIE acceptance of the curricula is advantageous but a methodology that involves and finally accrues ‘industry’ acceptance is more important.

Q. Is marketing the program an allowable cost?

A. Yes.

Q. Can one rural provider partner with another rural provider to strengthen the proposal and ultimately the project?

A. Certainly, but one would have to be identified as the lead agency.

Q. If a potential respondent has had successes with similar projects in the past should it tout those projects in the proposal?

A. Yes. The section in Attachment II, Item 2., Experience, is where such projects should be listed. Keep in mind, however, that this section is seeking information on projects that relate directly to this initiative so respondents are advised not to include projects that do not relate to this RFP.

Q. There was a question about the four areas mentioned in 1.0 on Page 1. that are the focus of this initiative and whether respondents should address all four areas in their responses.

A. Respondents should answer the specific questions listed in Attachment II with these focus areas in mind.

Q. An attendee stated that when it submits a proposal it may not have the program fully defined and all the players in place. Can respondents just provide the methodologies for how the program will be defined?

A. Attachment II requests respondents to provide certain methodologies. However, WFI is looking for proposals that reflect a commitment of the players. We would not want to review and evaluate ‘how’ a respondent is going to set up the project and find out at a later date, either during contract negotiation or actual rolling out of the contract, that the respondents ‘plan’ for the project required major adjustments because, when it submitted its proposal, it did not have all its ‘players in place.’ In addition, during discussion of this issue, attendees were reminded that WFI is not seeking an “off the shelf” product but rather one that will be expanded or created with heavy business involvement.

Q. How does WFI envision the funds from this project to be spent?

A. Respondents will tell WFI how they anticipate utilizing these funds for the project in the budget document they submit. However, the contracts resulting from this RFP will not be reimbursement contracts, meaning that WFI will not pay contractors for accrued expenses/costs related to the contract but will pay for the delivery of services.

Q. Can these funds be used for support services for students?

A. Since WFI will pay for actual deliverables or product, such as curriculum development or enrollments/completions/placements, the contractor may use contract funds for support services for students but that use ought to be reflected in the budget. Also, regional workforce boards may be a source for funding for student assistance as a form of leveraged funds.

Q. Can program income be used for helping fund the program beyond the term of the contract (beyond 6/30/06)?

A. See Section 13.10. Program income that is not used to enhance or expand the program during the term of the contract will be reimbursed to WFI.

Q. Can services provided by regional workforce boards at no cost or reduced costs be considered leveraged funds?

A. All RFPs that WFI issues either require or strongly encourage two things – the local leveraging of funds and the partnering with regional workforce boards. Regional workforce boards can be a tremendous resource for local businesses. Most have some sort of business unit that is involved in assisting businesses through the services the regional board may provide.

Q. Please clarify what is meant in Section 6.8 by “sharing information with other institutions and organizations, public and private, serving the industry elsewhere in the state”?

A. Almost all of the initiatives that WFI funds are considered ‘demonstration’ projects meaning that there is an intent to determine the success of such projects and to share those successes with others in the form of a best practices mechanism. Section 6.8 relates to that process. This concept does not mean that contractors are required to give away product that it has developed but they must have a mechanism for sharing best practices with other possible providers in the state. It is a part of the intent of the RFP, therefore, is to promote the exportation of successful projects throughout the state by having contractors funded through this initiative to share methodologies with others.

NOTE: WFI will not accept further questions regarding this solicitation.

The deadline for submitting proposals remains –

5:00 PM, Eastern, February 11, 2005