

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

RFQQ Title: Industry Skills Cohort Trainings

RFQQ #: Industry Skills Cohort Trainings - 8-12-2021

Release Date: August 12, 2021

Proposals Due: September 29, 2021

WorkForce Central

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY - EQUAL ACCESS

WorkForce Central is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. Washington Relay Service – 711

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A. INTRODUCTION

WorkForce Central stewards the Pierce County workforce development system on behalf of the Pierce County Workforce Development Council. We bridge the gap between workers, community organizations, and employers to build a robust workforce pipeline and ensure economic vitality across the region. WorkForce Central champions a comprehensive, collaborative, system-wide approach and actively pursues investments in workforce development as a vital component of a strong economy. We oversee workforce services for individuals and businesses to ensure they are reliable, high-quality, and exceed customer expectations.

B. REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND QUOTATIONS

1. Purpose

In Pierce County, employers across high-demand industries are seeking qualified jobseekers to fill positions that will lead to living wage employment. In many cases, the skills needed to enter these occupations can be learned in focused cohort trainings lasting from 2-16 weeks. There are thousands of local jobseekers ready to reskill or upskill successfully into these occupations with a combination of accessible training opportunities and individualized wrap-around support.

The purpose of this Request for Qualifications and Quotations (RFQQ) is to build a strong pool of technical training providers that WorkForce Central can work with over the next three years to deliver training focused on skills needed in local, high-demand industries. When employers identify a need, we want to be prepared to quickly respond by funding and coordinating with training providers identified through this RFQQ. Having a selected group of training providers allows WorkForce Central, as the Local Workforce Board, to be more nimble and timely in our response when a training need is identified in the community. This RFQQ is designed to identify the dynamic, employer-driven training we will fund to support the technical skill development of individuals seeking opportunities to enter or advance in the industry pathways identified below.

2. Scope of Work

Overview

WorkForce Central is seeking qualified organizations or entities to provide employer-driven, reskill-upskill training that is delivered to cohorts of participants. Training will prepare individuals to enter living-wage employment in one or more of the industry, occupation, and skill development pathways identified as priorities in this request, which include:

- Behavioral and Mental Health Care
- Commercial Driving
- Construction Trades
- Healthcare, Nursing, Medical Coding and Billing, Administration
- Manufacturing, Automation
- Renewable Energy, Microgrids, Storage Systems, Solar and Wind Energy Production
- Technology, IT and Communications, Cybersecurity
- Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance

- Water Systems Management, Wastewater Treatment, Floodplain Management, Habitat Restoration, and Green Stormwater Infrastructure
- Welding

Ideal respondents will demonstrate previous success with and a plan for providing training to WIOA Title I eligible individuals; Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American and Pacific Islander populations and other communities of color; individuals impacted by poverty; individuals with disabilities; veterans and military spouses; and additional populations facing systemic barriers to employment.

Cohorts

This RFQQ is specific to entities that will train cohorts, or groups of individuals who all move through training simultaneously. WorkForce Central will not prescribe cohort size. We invite respondents to propose appropriately sized cohorts for the training they offer. Please be sure to describe the training format, including virtual and/or in-person.

Recruitment and Community Outreach

Training contracts will be funded by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I funds, through the Department of Labor. **All individuals to be trained must be eligible for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I services, meaning they meet requirements that demonstrate they face significant barriers to employment.** Please see WorkForce Central's [WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Eligibility & Documentation Handbook](#) for specific WIOA Title I eligibility information and additional WIOA-related policies located at [WorkForce Central Policies](#).

Selected training providers will collaborate with Pierce County WIOA Title I service providers and Workforce Central's communications team on planning, logistics, and communications support for recruitment. While selected training providers will work with WIOA providers to recruit and enroll WIOA Title I eligible participants, respondents must propose a solid outreach and recruitment plan with the understanding that recruitment is not the WIOA providers' responsibility.

Skill Development

Selected training providers will provide tangible, measurable skill development in one or more areas directly related to the reskill-upskill requirements for the employer-driven, in-demand occupation(s) or pathway(s) connected to the training. As applicable, training providers will provide industry-recognized certification or documented credential attainment for the occupation or pathway.

Supportive Services

Selected training providers will partner with local WIOA Title I service providers to ensure individuals are supported in removing barriers to training completion and subsequent employment.

Pierce County Employment Connections and Placements

Ideal respondents will demonstrate connection to Pierce County employers and local, in-demand employment pathways and the ability to link successful trainees with related occupations once cohort trainings are complete. Respondents' proposals must articulate how learned skills transfer from training into high demand occupations, demonstrate employer endorsement of training, and include employment outcomes.

3. Funding

Proposals submitted for this RFQQ will help guide WorkForce Central's training investments in Pierce County over the next three years. For this reason, we are not setting an upper limit on the total amount of funding that may be awarded or the maximum amount allowed per proposal.

WorkForce Central will assess proposals submitted for this RFQQ to determine reasonable participant costs for trainings associated with the employer-driven priorities outlined above. We recognize there is no single cost for training across industries and that associated costs will vary depending on several factors, including but not limited to the duration of training, cohort size, and delivery format. WorkForce Central will evaluate proposed budgets based on reasonable cost comparisons. We request that respondents propose their best-practice models for training and the costs associated with these models on a "per cohort" and/or "per participant" basis. Costs for past cohort trainings have averaged between \$2,000-\$12,000 per participant, depending on duration, delivery model, and training requirements. Respondents' budgets should reflect costs for one full cohort based on the proposed training model.

Funds through this RFQQ may be used to cover the cost of staff wages and benefits, administrative operating expenses, and direct participant costs. Use of federal funds must be in compliance with federal, WIOA and state regulations, and [WorkForce Central Policies](#). Detailed information about allowable uses of federal funds can be found in the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations \(eCFR\)](#), Subpart E – Cost Principles.

WorkForce Central may receive funding that can be used towards stipends or wages for participants enrolled in training. This funding may be included in training contracts, although this is not required. Respondents should indicate if they have experience providing participant stipends or wages for training and if they have payroll systems and human resources capacity in place to enable paying stipends or wages to participants.

WorkForce Central may or may not award contracts as a result of this RFQQ, depending on the qualifications and quotations received and other considerations that may arise.

4. Period of Performance

Cohort training resulting from this RFQQ will occur between January 2022 - December 2025. WorkForce Central's intent is to build a pool of cohort training providers through a single procurement process so WorkForce Central can be timely and responsive to employer-driven reskill and upskill training needs as they arise over the next three years. We anticipate funding multiple providers and multiple training cohorts resulting from this RFQQ during this time period.

With this RFQQ's focus on rapid reskill-upskill training, duration of any single training should not exceed four (4) months, regardless of the number of hours per week the training includes.

WorkForce Central will contact all respondents on or near November 1st, 2021 to indicate interest in moving forward. At that time, timeline and next steps will be negotiated based on local need, training

provider capacity, and any additional required factors. We understand there may be changes to cost, schedule, and training provider capacity over the course of the three years of the performance period. These factors may be revisited and amended as appropriate over time and through contract negotiations.

WorkForce Central reserves the right at its sole discretion to renew or not renew any contract resulting from this RFQQ, in accordance with WIOA regulations and depending on contractor performance, availability of funds, and the Pierce County Workforce Development Council’s strategic direction.

5. RFQQ Timeline

RFQQ Release	August 12, 2021
Due Date for Questions	September 27, 2021, 5:00 PM PDT
Proposals Due	September 29, 2021, 5:00 PM PDT
Evaluation of Proposals	September 29 - October 13, 2021
Informational Interviews (if held)	October 19 - 25, 2021
Respondent Notifications	On or near November 8, 2021
Contract Negotiation	Variable
Contract Start Date	Variable

6. Submission Requirements

All proposals must be submitted by email as a single PDF document to procurement@workforce-central.org no later than **September 29, 2021, 5:00 PM PDT**. Please include the RFQQ number in the email subject line. Proposals received after 5:00 PM PDT on the due date will be automatically disqualified from consideration. Respondents will receive email confirmation of proposal receipt.

The maximum length of proposal narratives is eight (8) pages. Attachments are not included in the page maximum. WorkForce Central will be unable to evaluate proposals with narratives that exceed the page limit. Proposals must include all information and attachments listed below to be considered responsive to this RFQQ and evaluated. Please do not include or provide links to additional information or materials.

Proposal Narrative: Please number and label proposal narrative information as shown below.

1) Respondent Information:

- a. Organization or entity name
- b. Street address and mailing address
- c. Contact person name, title, email address and phone number
- d. Website address
- e. Type of organization (non-profit, for profit, independent contractor, sole proprietorship, etc.)
- f. Washington State Business License # / UBI # (please state if you do not have a WA UBI #)
- g. Federal Tax ID # (please state if you do not have a Federal Tax ID #)

- h. DUNS # (please state if you do not have a DUNS #)
 - i. Please state if you have a payroll system and human resources capacity in place to pay stipends to participants (this is not a requirement for a contract)
- 2) Experience Providing Proposed Training: Describe your experience providing the proposed training and the related services described in the Scope of Work, including successful recruitment, training, completion rates, certification, and employment outcomes, plus specific experience providing these services to populations facing systemic and significant barriers to employment.
 - 3) Training Program Design and Plan: Describe the proposed training program design and model, including, but not limited to: a) training structure and curriculum, b) maximum participants per training cohort, c) schedule and duration (not to exceed 4 months, full or part time), d) method of delivery (virtual, in-person, etc.), e) location of training, f) training completion rates and outcomes.
 - 4) Occupation and Demand: State the exact occupation(s) the training leads to and wages tied to these occupations and pathways. Provide documentation of local occupational demand for careers aligned with the proposed skills training.
 - 5) Skills, Certifications, Credentials: Describe the industry-recognized skills that will be attained through the proposed training, as well as any certifications and/or credentials participants will earn.
 - 6) Job Placement and Employer Validation: Describe how you connect successful trainees to jobs upon completion of training, and employer validation and support of the training model and content. Cite specific employer commitments to hire participants, if applicable.
 - 7) Outreach and Recruitment: Describe your plan for direct outreach and recruitment of participants, including your plan to partner with local WIOA providers to recruit and enroll individuals who meet WIOA Title 1 eligibility requirements - those facing high barriers to employment.
 - 8) Other Related Experience: If applicable, describe any other special experience, skills, knowledge or abilities your organization can offer.
 - 9) Training Cost: Provide the total estimated cost of the cohort training and training deliverables broken out by line item. Please clearly present the cost per training cohort and/or per participant. Please include number of participants per cohort in the proposed model.

Attachments:

1. Two (2) completed Employer Reference Forms (Attachment A) - Link to fillable form: [EMPLOYER REFERENCE FORM](#)
2. One (1) Training Participant Reference Form (Attachment B) completed by a past training participants – Link to fillable form: [TRAINING PARTICIPANT REFERENCE FORM](#)
3. Signed WorkForce Central Assurances and Certifications Form (Attachment C) - Link to fillable form: [WORKFORCE CENTRAL ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS](#)

7. Technical Review

WorkForce Central will review proposals for the following submission requirements: 1) Proposal Narrative does not exceed the maximum page limit; 2) all requested responses are included in the Proposal Narrative; 3) all requested Attachments are included; and 4) proposal does not include materials that were not requested.

Respondents whose proposals do not meet submission requirements will receive an email notification from WorkForce Central that describes how their proposal did not meet submission requirements. The respondent will have the opportunity to modify their proposal and re-submit it within three (3) business days. The email notification from WorkForce Central will state the date and time by which proposals must be re-submitted to be included in the proposal evaluation process.

WorkForce Central will also check if respondents are debarred or suspended from receiving federal funds by using the U.S. Government's System for Award Management (www.SAM.gov). Respondents found to be debarred or suspended from receiving federal funds will receive an email notification from WorkForce Central stating this finding and that they are ineligible for funding through this RFQQ.

8. Inquiries

Please email all inquiries to procurement@workforce-central.org, with the RFQQ number in the email subject line. Questions must be received by September 27, 2021, 5:00 PM PDT. All questions and WorkForce Central's responses will be posted at [WorkForce Central - Cohort Trainings RFQQ](#).

This RFQQ and the forms required as proposal attachments are posted on WorkForce Central's website. Information obtained from other sources is not official and should not be relied upon.

C. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria	Possible Points
Experience and expertise providing services described in the scope of work	15
Strength and feasibility of cohort training model and design	15
Track record and strong plan for recruiting, training and supporting communities facing systemic barriers to employment	20
Documented current and/or future demand for skillsets and related occupations	15
Strength of employer connections, references, and successful job placement experience	10
Strength and feasibility of plan to connect successful trainees with employment	10
Proposed cost of services is reasonable and justified by the line item budget and the per cohort and/or per participant cost is clear	15
Total	100 points

D. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

All proposals that meet submission requirements will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee, who will review and score proposals using the evaluation criteria in Section C. The goal is to create a pool of qualified training providers for multiple cohort training opportunities over the next three years.

The Evaluation Committee may decide to request virtual informational interviews with some or all respondents before finalizing their recommendations for potential funding. Up to twenty points for interviews may be added to overall scores. If held, informational interviews are expected to occur October 19 – 25, 2021.

WorkForce Central may select respondents for contracts based on the initial information in their proposal, without modification. However, WorkForce Central reserves the right to first conduct additional interviews, request further information from the respondent or references, conduct a site visit, complete a WorkForce Central management review of the evaluation process, and/or make mutually agreed upon changes through contract negotiation.

This RFQQ does not commit WorkForce Central or the Pierce County Workforce Development Council to award contracts. Formal notification to award contracts and the actual execution of contracts are subject to the results of negotiations between selected respondents and WorkForce Central.

E. NOTIFICATIONS TO RESPONDENTS

All respondents that submit a proposal will be notified by email of WorkForce Central's decision regarding their proposal.

F. PUBLIC RECORDS

All data, material, and documentation originated and prepared by respondents pursuant to this RFQQ shall belong exclusively to the Pierce County Workforce Development Council and WorkForce Central and be subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

G. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Respondents must disclose any potential or apparent conflict of interest in undertaking this project or services as part of their proposal. A conflict of interest exists whenever an individual or organization could benefit directly or indirectly from access to information or from a decision over which they may have influence and includes a perceived conflict of interest where someone might reasonably perceive there to be such benefit and influence.

H. LIMITATIONS AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

Any contract awarded through this RFQQ will be funded with WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funds. Any changes in WIOA regulations and guidance, funding level, or the Pierce County Workforce Development Council's strategic direction may result in a change in this project or

services. In such instances, the Workforce Development Council and WorkForce Central will not be held liable for content in submitted proposals or this RFQQ.

The entire cost for the preparation and delivery of proposals or any related communications shall be at the expense of respondents.

Respondents must not be debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or declared ineligible for receiving federal funds or participation in this project or services. Proposals from respondents identified by WorkForce Central as debarred, suspended or otherwise ineligible will not be evaluated.

Any respondent awarded a contract through this RFQQ will be required to follow WorkForce Central's [General Terms & Conditions](#) for contracts. Awardees will also need to complete WorkForce Central's [APPLICANT INFORMATION AND PRE-AWARD ASSESSMENT](#).

ATTACHMENT A – Employer Reference Form



EMPLOYER REFERENCE FORM

Instructions for organizations submitting a proposal to WorkForce Central: Please use this form to obtain references from two (2) employers/businesses who are directly involved with your training programs, preferably employers involved in the training proposed for funding. After filling in the name of your organization below, please send the form to employers to complete, sign, and return to you. Two (2) Employer Reference Forms must be included as part of your PDF proposal package.

Organization Requesting Reference:

Instructions for employers/businesses completing the Reference Form: Please answer questions as they relate to your involvement in training program(s) provided by the organization requesting this reference, then sign and return the form to them. WorkForce Central may contact you to verify that you completed this Reference Form. *Thank you very much for sharing this information.*

Name of Person Completing Reference Form:

Business Name, City & State:

Phone Number & Email Address:

- A. Please state the training program(s) provided by this organization that you are involved in, and how long you have worked with the organization on this or other training programs.**

- B. Please briefly describe how you are involved in the organization’s training program(s).**

- C. Does your work with this organization’s training program(s) benefit your business? If yes, how?**

D. Do you recommend this organization for a training contract from WorkForce Central?

Yes No

If yes, please list up to five reasons that help explain your recommendation:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

E. Is there anything else you believe we should know about working with this organization?



SIGNATURE

DATE

ATTACHMENT B – Training Participant Reference Form



TRAINING PARTICIPANT REFERENCE FORM

Instructions for organizations submitting a proposal to WorkForce Central: Please use this form to obtain a reference from an individual who has participated in a training program offered by your organization. After filling in the name of your organization below, please send the form to the individual to complete, sign, and return to you. This Reference Form must be included as part of your PDF proposal package.

Organization Requesting Reference:

Instructions for individuals completing the Reference Form: Please answer questions as they relate to your participation in a training program(s) offered by the organization requesting this reference, then sign and return the form to them. WorkForce Central may contact you to verify that you completed this Reference Form. *Thank you very much for sharing your feedback – it is very helpful to our decisions.*

Name of Person Completing Reference Form:

City & State of Residence:

Phone Number and/or Email Address:

A. Please state the name/type of training program(s) with this organization that you participated in and the dates of participation.

B. Please tell us about the training program(s) you participated in, such as the skills learned, length of program, schedule, and what you did and didn't like about the program.

C. How did the training program(s) help you meet your goals?

D. Do you recommend that this organization receive a training contract from WorkForce Central?

Yes No

If yes, please list up to five reasons that help explain your recommendation:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

E. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about this organization and/or the training you participated in?



SIGNATURE

DATE

ATTACHMENT C - WorkForce Central Assurances and Certifications Form



WORKFORCE CENTRAL ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

I/we make the following certifications and assurances as a required element of the proposal to which it is attached, understanding that the truthfulness of the facts affirmed here and continuing compliance with these requirements are conditions precedent to an award or continuation of award:

1. I/we declare that all answers and statements made in the proposal are true and correct.
2. The prices and/or cost data have been determined independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with others for the purpose of restricting competition. However, I/we may freely join with other persons or organizations for the purpose of presenting a single proposal.
3. The attached proposal is a firm offer for a period of 60 days following receipt, and it may be accepted by WorkForce Central without further negotiation (except where obviously required by lack of certainty in key terms) at any time within the 60-day period.
4. In preparing this proposal, I/we have not been assisted by any current or former employee of the WorkForce Central whose duties relate (or did relate) to this proposal or prospective subaward, and who was assisting in other than their official, public capacity. (Any exceptions to these assurances are described in full detail on a separate page and attached to this document.)
5. I/we understand that the WorkForce Central will not reimburse me/us for any costs incurred in the preparation of this proposal. All proposals become the property of WorkForce Central, and I/we claim no proprietary right to the ideas, writings, items, or samples, unless so stated in this proposal.
6. Unless otherwise required by law, the prices and/or cost data that have been submitted have not been knowingly disclosed by the bidder/respondent and will not knowingly be disclosed, directly or indirectly, to any other bidder/respondent or to any competitor.
7. I/we agree that submission of the attached proposal constitutes acceptance of the solicitation contents and the general terms and conditions. If there are any exceptions to these terms, I/we have described those exceptions in detail on a page attached to this document.
8. No attempt has been made or will be made by the bidder/respondent to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a proposal for the purpose of restricting competition.
9. I/we grant the WorkForce Central the right to contact references and others, who may have pertinent information regarding the bidder's/respondent's prior experience and ability to perform the services contemplated in this procurement.
10. I/we accept and will abide by WorkForce Central's Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy as provided at [Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

Title of Authorized Representative