



Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area 14 Bidder's Conference

February 13, 2025

Columbus City Hall – IT Dept. Conference Room
1111 1st Avenue, 2nd Floor
Columbus, Georgia 31901

These minutes encompass an overview of the discussion and questions and answers generated during the Bidder's Conference for the solicitation of Youth Services held by the Columbus Consolidated Government Job Training Division on behalf of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Area 14. This conference was held at 10:00 a.m., February 13, 2025, at Columbus City Hall IT Department Conference Room, 1111 1st Avenue, 2nd Floor, Columbus, Georgia.

Please be reminded that this was the only opportunity questions and answers could be provided during the solicitation process. Good luck.

Organizations Represented:

Ms. Beverly Combs, Partnership In Caring
Ms. Shani Forte', Partnership In Caring
Ms. LeWanda McGruder, The Office
Ms. Johnnie Powell, Operation M.E.N.
Ms. Arlena Williams, Enrichment Services

WIOA Staff:

Dr. Valerie Richardson, WIOA Director
Feleshia Marshall, WIOA Assistant Director
Barbara Coppage, WIOA Finance Manager
Lisa Lane, WIOA Administrative Staff



Overview

The facilitator began with introductions and a welcome to everyone present. Attendees were informed that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of transcription of the minutes and that this was the only opportunity available to ask questions concerning the proposal for youth services for Program Year 2025.

The facilitator provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Board (LCWDB) announcing the release of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to organizations interested in providing youth workforce development services to Area Fourteen (WDA-14) youth ages 16-24. It was noted the LCWDB is soliciting proposals for two (2) separate activities:

1. Youth services to be provided to in-school youth (Juniors and Seniors in high school) in the seven counties of Chattahoochee, Clay, Harris, Quitman, Randolph, Stewart, and Talbot.; and
2. Youth services (Internships – Work Experience) to be provided to out-of-school youth (ages 18 – 24) residing in Muscogee County only

The facilitator noted this RFP is issued for a period, July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, with an option to renew for two additional years depending on available funding and successful performance outcomes. All successful bidders will be required to continue to provide required services to any carryover participants still actively enrolled in the WIOA youth programs as of June 30, 2025, that may be associated with the programs identified. This, however, will not count toward the number of youths required to be served under this proposal nor shall additional funds be allocated to serve the additional youth that may be identified as carryovers. The Administrative Entity may, based upon contract negotiations, assign carryover youth already enrolled in the WIOA Youth Program accordingly.

The facilitator further noted that the LCWDB reserved the option to modify contracts on a year-to-year basis. Contracts will be cost reimbursement based, with funding linked to defined performance outcomes, including WIOA measures, and future funding availability, contractors' satisfactory performance and other factors as may be deemed appropriate and necessary.

The facilitator presented an overview of each of the two different activities in the Solicitation packet stating the Lower Chattahoochee Workforce Development Board (LCWDB) had set aside WIOA funding for youth activities identified herein, to be conducted in the eight counties, including Muscogee County, for Program Year 2025 (July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026). All contracts awarded shall be subject to renewal each year, for a period not to exceed two additional years, based upon contract performance, availability of funds, and contingent upon successful contract negotiations. Funding is for specified youth training programs and services contained as follows and identified in the solicitation packet only.

Solicitation I

ACTIVITY: WORK-BASED INTERNSHIP (WORK EXPERIENCE) ACTIVITY

Seeking an innovative year-round internship (work experience) program services activity for In-School Youth for 7 counties (Chattahoochee, Clay, Harris, Quitman, Randolph, Stewart & Talbot).

- **TARGET SERVICE POPULATION:** In-School Youth, (Juniors and Seniors in high school).
- **NUMBER TO BE SERVED:** Thirty-seven (37)
- **TOTAL FUNDING SET ASIDE FOR THIS ACTIVITY:** \$158,625.00

Solicitation II

ACTIVITY: WORK-BASED INTERNSHIP (WORK EXPERIENCE) AND RETENTION ACTIVITY

Seeking an innovative year-round program that incorporates pre-employment/work readiness skills training and internship (work experience) and retention services activity that results in job retention in unsubsidized employment at completion of training.

- **TARGET SERVICE POPULATION:** Out-of-School Youth, 18-24 years of age, Muscogee Co. Resident
- **NUMBER TO BE SERVED:** Thirty-seven (37)

- **TOTAL FUNDING SET ASIDE FOR THIS ACTIVITY: \$146,800.00**

It was stated by the facilitator that clarification will be provided regarding the number of hours that work experience will be allowed for youth participating in these activities. As noted in the proposal, the maximum allowable hours for work experience will be for up to 120 hours for In-School Youth (Juniors and Seniors in High School) and up to 320 hours for Out-of-School Youth (18 – 24 years of age).

An inquiry was made regarding the hourly rate of pay. The facilitator noted that the LCWDB Board has set the hourly rate for In-School Youth at \$10.00 per hour. Additionally, the hourly rate of pay for Out-of-School Youth will be paid at the same prevailing entry wage of any similar situated employee at the business at which a worksite agreement has been established but in no event less than the highest of the minimum wage laws, or prevailing rate of pay for individuals employed in similar occupations by the employer. Wages will be paid for the actual hours worked.

It was reemphasized that wages for youth participating in either of the work experience activities have not been incorporated in the funds provided under this solicitation. All wages for eligible participants will be paid by the WIOA Administration.

The facilitator noted, in accordance with local policy, In-School Youth must attend school each day prior to participating in the worksite training. If for any reason, class was not held (Teachers' In-service Day, Holiday, School Closures, etc.) the participant could not work that day either. This policy promotes class attendance. It was also noted that an In-School Youth may only be permitted to work 3 hours per day in accordance with child labor laws.

A summary of the Implementation Schedule outlined on Page 6 of the solicitation package was discussed.

Under the definitions, the Facilitator noted there had been a change in terminology for the definition for "Case Management". The new term was "comprehensive guidance and counseling".

The facilitator noted that Page 23, Section V, described how proposals must be submitted. Bidders were informed that all proposals must be in a sealed envelope and marked in the upper right-hand corner, either "**Proposal: PY25 WIOA In-School Youth Internship (Work Experience) Services**"; or "**PY25 WIOA Out-of-School Youth Internship (Work Experience) and Retention Services**".

Each package submitted must contain one original and four (4) copies. Each proposal must be clearly marked 'Original' or 'Copy'. The original document and all attachments **that require signature** must be signed by the person authorized to enter contracts on behalf of the organization/agency. It was stressed that the original proposal must be in **a color other than black ink** (preferably BLUE INK) to distinguish which is the original versus copies of the proposal.

It was reemphasized that no proposals will be accepted after 5:00 PM Friday, March 7, 2025 (the deadline for submission). This means "logged in" (as received) at the Job Training Offices located at Columbus City Hall, 1111 1st Avenue, 2nd Floor, Suite #2145, Columbus, Georgia. It was stressed that any proposals received after this time and date would not be accepted.

Monday, March 10, 2025, proposals would be reviewed for responsiveness. A proposal would be considered responsive if it meets the criteria outlined in Section C (pages 15-16). The Youth Committee would only review the responsive bids. They will evaluate each responsive proposal based on the criteria outlined beginning on page 17. The review is rated on a 100-point scale, with 5 additional points for locally owned businesses scoring a minimum of 70 points or better. Minority and female owned businesses are also encouraged to submit proposals.

It was clarified that it would be the successful bidder's responsibility to recruit participants for the services funded. The WIOA Administration would determine eligibility.

It was reemphasized that the contracts awarded would be "cost reimbursement", which means that the WIOA Administration would reimburse any costs incurred that are outlined in the agreed upon budget with proper support

documentation provided.

The Facilitator noted that the second part of the Request for Proposal Package contained the cover page (required with all proposals), the checklist for submission and the additional proposal information required for submitting the proposal (Part 2 began on page 40).

The Facilitator stressed the importance of using the Proposal Checklist to ensure that all required items were included in your proposal packets and were in the specified order prior to sealing them for submission. The checklist did not have to accompany your proposal, but it would be advantageous to confirm all required documentation is present and, in the order, and format requested. Proposals failing to meet the submission requirements will be automatically disqualified for further consideration.

The Facilitator noted that a minimum of three (3) references were required to be included in the proposals. An inquiry was made about the references just being provided as a list or were reference letters required. The Facilitator stated that the references submitted would be confirmed and verified and that an actual letter of reference was preferred. The references would be contacted to confirm/attest to the agency's capability of performing well, by having the staff, experience in serving the target populations, and having a good sound financial system in place to operate the program effectively.

The Facilitator gave a brief overview of the Statement of Work. During discussion, the Participant Characteristics (Priority of Service) form was explained. All youth must possess at least one barrier to qualify for WIOA services. The Participant Characteristics/Barrier to Employment form explained how your agency would prioritize your services for each of the barriers a youth may be facing: basic skills deficient; within the age of compulsory school attendance, but had not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter (in-school youth); was homeless, a runaway, or in foster care or in an out-of-home placement; or aged out of the foster care system (out-of-school youth only); pregnant or parenting; poor employability skills, poor work history (out-of-school youth); high school dropout (out-of-school youth); subject to the juvenile or adult justice system; individuals with a disability; an English language learner (verification required); Veterans/eligible spouse of certain Veterans (out-of-school youth) or finally, *low-income individuals who require additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment. The Facilitator noted that only five percent (5%) of the entire roster of youth served during a program year could qualify with this barrier. (i.e. if 100 youth total were served during a program year, only 5 of those youth could be qualified using the "low-income individuals who require additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment" as their barrier.)

The facilitator noted that it would be best not to focus a lot of time and energy on this barrier and to please keep this in mind when completing this form. The "planned number" should total thirty-seven (the number solicited to be served during the program year) and the planned percentage should total one hundred (100).

The facilitator also noted the form found on page 51 "Target Occupations" must be completed to list the training occupations which your agency would target and the prevailing entry-level wage for each occupation. You can find the O' Net codes for the positions you will target at <http://online.onetcenter.org/>

The Common Measures (at Appendix B page 58) were discussed. An inquiry was made regarding the left column (Appendix B), would we be required to meet these (Adult) measures too? The Facilitator stated although the Adult Measures had been provided on Appendix B only the Youth Measures (right column) applied to the services being solicited.

A discussion regarding the implementation table outlined in (Part 2 page 21) Appendix D, Registrant Goal Summary. You must identify how many people you will serve and what your planned outcomes for 1st through 4th quarters would be. It was noted the figures are cumulative totals by which performance would be judged during the program year.

The facilitator noted that members of the Administrative Entity would conduct a pre-award monitoring during the period of negotiations and prior to actual signing of contracts with selected bidders.

APPENDIX C: Page 20-21, Fidelity bond requirements. Attendees were informed that a fidelity bond must be

provided that covers the entire contract period. Pages 20-21 covers specific bonding requirements and amounts of bond required. If a position bonds, each position must be bonded for the full amount.

Attendees were informed that a detailed budget narrative must be submitted with a proposal that explains the costs identified in the detailed line-item budget form. It was stressed that no material, labor, equipment, or facility costs will be provided unless specified in the budget and agreed upon by the WIOA Administration/Board.

Bidders were informed that all costs that are associated with providing program services must be identified on the budget form similar to that provided in the solicitation package. It was reiterated that Wages and FICA for participants should not be included as part of the proposed budgets submitted. Payment of wages would be the responsibility of the WIOA Administration.

Attendees were further informed that the assurances and certifications listed within the proposal would be part of all contracts that were awarded for Program Year 2025.

We extend our thanks to the agencies in attendance and wish all bidders' good luck.

Questions & Answers

The following questions and answers were presented and responded to during the Bidders Conference.

Q. What was the hourly rate of pay a participant can expect to be paid?

A. *The LCWDB Board has set the hourly rate for In-School Youth (Juniors and Seniors in high school) work experience (work-based training) at \$10.00 per hour. Additionally, the hourly rate of pay for the Out-of-School Youth (18 – 24 year-olds) Internship (work experience) will be paid at the same prevailing entry wage of any similar situated employee at the business, but in no event less than the highest of the minimum wage laws, or prevailing rate of pay for individuals employed in similar occupations by the employer. Wages will be paid for the actual hours worked.*

Q. Will we select the participants from various agencies or work in conjunction with the Department of Labor and the Department of Family and Children Services?

A. *It would be your decision. You may coordinate with any agency to receive individuals to serve under your program. Just understand that the individual must be determined eligible for WIOA. Also bear in mind, this is a program of choice, which means there is no guarantee that the individual referred won't choose another agency for services once the full array of services has been explained to them.*

Q. Can an individual who has graduated or gotten their GED be considered for the program?

A. *Yes, if the individual is not employed or currently enrolled in school, they can be referred to us for WIOA eligibility determination and assessment.*

Q. Do the 3 required references have to be written letters or could they be submitted as a list?

A. *The references provided would be confirmed and verified. Although reference letters were preferred, a list of three verifiable references would be acceptable.*

Q. On Appendix B, there are two columns, Adult (on the left) and Youth (on the right). Will we be required to meet the adult measures too (left column)?

A. *Although the Adult Measures had been provided on Appendix B only the Youth Measures (right column) applied to the services being solicited.*

Q. Should we get all the participants at once or can we do them in segments?

A. *That would be your decision. The implementation schedule is a breakdown of how each of the target populations will be served and will be a part of the contract negotiations between the WIOA Administration and contractor.*

Just to reiterate, the WIOA Administration monitors on a quarterly basis. Our monitoring team will come out and assess if you're meeting your goals and your agency is fulfilling your programmatic, performance and compliance obligations contractually agreed upon. If you have met or are exceeding them, that is also noted.

Q. Is it possible that more than one agency could be selected for funding?

A. *The Board has approved funding to be awarded to one agency that has an innovative program design that provides the specific youth services that each of the three solicitations (in the solicitation packet) is seeking.*

Q. What if we want to partner with another agency? Can we do that?

A. *Yes; However, proposals from consortia, partnerships or other combinations of organizations must identify one organization as the lead agency and prime contractor and must specify the assignment of subcontracting relationships. If you have an additional service that you are providing, when you complete your "Cost Allocation Plan", it should show how you are spreading your costs for additional personnel and operating expenses for providing the multiple programs. Your budget should show how much you are charging for each program based on your cost allocation split.*

Q. You stated there will be possible carryovers from the previous provider; can you tell us how many there will be?

A: *It is estimated that there may be some customers who would be considered carryover from a specific activity; however, should it be required for the awarded agency to take on the responsibility of follow-up services where applicable, coordination will be made from the WIOA Administrator (We would not have those figures until after the completion of the current program year).*

The facilitator asked if there were any additional questions, or any clarification required of what was being requested in the solicitation packet.

No further questions were asked during the Bidders Conference. Attendees were further reminded that once the meeting adjourned, no additional questions or responses could be provided. With no further discussion, the Bidders Conference was adjourned. Good Luck!