



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: **Job Training Services**

Funded by the
City of Boston
Neighborhood Jobs Trust

Martin J. Walsh
Mayor

Trinh Nguyen
Director of Jobs and Community Services

ISSUE DATE:

June 19, 2014

BIDDERS' CONFERENCE:

June 26, 2014, 10:00 a.m. Copley Library, Commonwealth Salon

LETTER OF INTENT DUE:

July 7, 2014

PROPOSALS DUE:

July 31, 2014

***Responses must be delivered by 5:00 p.m. to
43 Hawkins Street, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA***

Inquiries:

Ken. Barnes@boston.gov

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LETTER OF INTENT TO BID
NJT JOB TRAINING
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Letter of Intent due July 7, 2014

This is to notify the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services that the following organization intends to submit a proposal in response to the NJT Job Training RFP.
(Should you subsequently decide not to submit, please let us know.)

Lead Organization: _____

Address: _____

Contact>Title: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Name of program: _____

Type of program: _____

Anticipated partners (including employers) and targeted occupation(s):

Signature>Title: Lead Organization _____ Date _____

Please address correspondence to:

Cindy Chow
Jobs and Community Services
Planning and Policy Development – 3B
43 Hawkins Street
Boston, MA 02114

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS) is the City of Boston's workforce development agency. Under the leadership of Mayor Martin J. Walsh, JCS administers funding from various sources for the purpose of supporting a broad range of workforce-related services, including job training, adult basic education and youth employment services. One such funding source is the City of Boston's **Neighborhood Jobs Trust**, which distributes the jobs linkage funds paid by developers of large-scale commercial construction projects. (See Appendix C: Guide to the Neighborhood Jobs Trust). The Jobs Trust was established in 1987 in response to pressure from community organizations interested in making sure Boston residents benefited from employment generated by development. The founding documents of the Trust stipulate that the funds must be used to provide, to low and moderate income adult Boston residents, direct services which prepare them for and connect them to employment.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) solicits proposals for **job training** services. The Trust is issuing this RFP through its administrative agent, the Office of Jobs and Community Services, a division of the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC). JCS will handle all questions concerning this RFP, review all submissions, and prepare recommendations to the trustees. Selected applicants will enter into contracts with EDIC.

II. PURPOSE OF FUNDS

Jobs linkage funding must be used to meet the employment needs of lower income adult Boston residents, defined as below 80% of median income according to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (see Appendix B). The trustees are interested in serving lower-skilled individuals, with multiple barriers to employment, who may not be easily served through other workforce development initiatives such as the federally-funded training voucher system.

The trustees have a particular interest in ensuring that services reach ex-offenders and other individuals with CORI issues; homeless, recently-homeless or near-homeless individuals; and TANF recipients. While not every individual in a training program funded under this RFP must come from one of these target populations, it is expected that at least 25% of NJT-funded participants meet one or more of these criteria. Funded programs will be subject to close monitoring for operations in compliance with contract terms and conditions. NJT contracts are generally performance-based, with some portion of payments tied to meeting enrollment and placement goals.

Applicants should submit proposals reflecting the needs of the target population they have identified. For example, re-entry programs will need to demonstrate the involvement of committed employers willing to hire ex-offenders. If the target population lacks basic educational or English language skills, the program must integrate appropriate educational services of sufficient intensity to increase skill levels in a relatively short time frame. If the

target population requires evening or weekend programming, applicants should design programs with hours meeting that need.

The Neighborhood Jobs Trust is obligated to maintain a balance between services targeted to specific neighborhoods impacted by development and services accessible to residents across the city, including neighborhoods not currently impacted by large-scale development. In reviewing proposals and making funding decisions, the trustees will be mindful of the need to maintain this balance. Please indicate, on the Proposal Cover Sheet and in the Target Population section, which neighborhoods the *majority* of your participants are expected to come from.

The intent of this RFP is to serve adults seeking full-time, permanent employment. The primary outcome for programs funded under this RFP is full-time work at a livable wage. For certain populations, or certain occupations, temporary jobs or part-time jobs (at least 20 hours per week) may be a strategic first step. Applicants proposing such strategies, however, must make a compelling argument in their favor. In some cases, placement into a post-secondary program with a strong likelihood of leading to employment will be considered a successful placement; again, applicants proposing outcomes other than jobs will need to make a compelling case.

III. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include non-profit and for-profit providers of training and education services. Providers do not necessarily need to be located in Boston, but only Boston residents can be served with these funds, and accessibility for Boston residents will be a key evaluation criterion. Proposals must demonstrate capacity to provide state-of-the-art services to successfully prepare people for employment. The Trust is interested in proposals from training providers with the following competencies:

- Demonstrated ability to successfully educate, train and job-place low-income adults, including one or more of the specific target populations identified above.
- Staff expertise in providing proactive case management to support clients in overcoming barriers to training, completing a program and retaining employment.
- Demonstrated ability to adapt curriculum and instructional methodology to meet the needs of people with a variety of learning styles and ability levels.
- Internal monitoring capabilities which allow for program modification as needed.
- Staff experience in engaging employers and strong employer involvement in program design.
- Staffing structures which support the services proposed.

IV. SERVICES REQUESTED

The Neighborhood Jobs Trust seeks proposals for programs offering job skills training leading to good jobs at livable wages. Services should include outreach and recruitment, in-depth assessment, classroom and (as appropriate) work-site instruction, case management, educational and career counseling, job placement, and post-placement services. It is anticipated that contracts will be for 12 months, with an option for renewal based on performance.

This RFP solicits programs and services targeted to individuals in need of skilled entry-level employment. This can include people who have been out of the labor force for some time as well as individuals who are underemployed. For purposes of this RFP, underemployed can mean: those in temporary, part-time or unstable positions; those working in jobs without benefits; those whose income does not suffice to meet the needs of their families. The HUD 80%-of-median income limit gives this RFP a broader range of income eligibility than is typical in publicly-funded workforce programs.

Accurate and timely labor market information is critical to any successful job training program. Applicants must present data documenting need in the occupations they are targeting. The Trust will consider proposals focusing on any industry sector demonstrating a reasonable expectation of jobs for program graduates. While health care has long been the strongest industry sector in Boston, there are many other types of employers hiring entry-level and mid-level workers. Ultimately, the Trust will be looking for evidence of strong employer involvement in the form of a detailed Memorandum of Agreement. Multiple employer partners are encouraged.

In funding workforce development services, the Trust adheres to a set of principles, incorporated into this RFP, which include:

- The provision of high quality workforce services leading to employment with benefits at family sustaining wages, or at a minimum Boston's official Living Wage.
- Programs designed to meet the needs of specific target populations with multiple barriers to employment through various support services.
- Integrated training models which incorporate adult basic education or ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and which connect participants to jobs or to post-secondary education leading to employment.
- The use of technology in training programs to increase efficiency and effectiveness while meeting customer needs and enhancing employability.
- Investment in comprehensive assessment tools and processes which value customer choice for those entering job training programs.
- Reemployment of dislocated workers and a commitment to provide training and related services to low-income adults with multiple barriers to employment.
- A dual customer approach which enhances labor market opportunities for both the job seeker and employer.

In today's economy, workers must possess a wide array of cognitive skills at a high level of mastery. Training providers face the challenge of addressing this with programs capable of successfully moving unemployed and underemployed Boston residents into skilled entry-level work. For example, while no one doubts the need for skilled office workers capable of using multiple software programs, the labor market now requires industry-specific knowledge and familiarity in addition to standard office skills. This RFP seeks proposals with specific employer partners who are invested in the proposed training program, exhibiting methods and curricula aligned with the full skill set sought by employers in the targeted field of employment. Proposals should clearly describe the skill competencies required by the employer partner(s).

Through this RFP, the Trust seeks to meet needs which cannot be fully met through the existing training voucher system funded by the federal Department of Labor. Programs which currently receive training vouchers should not expect to receive a group contract under this RFP simply to serve more people. We seek services which build upon and fill gaps in the federally-funded workforce development system. We also seek innovative models or approaches which respond to the needs of both job-seekers and employers in today's changing economy. The outcome of the program must be a training-related job, or placement into a post-secondary program leading to a career. Described below are allowable program types:

- ❖ **Occupational skills training** provides individuals with the specific skills needed for a particular occupation. Employers are involved in the development of curricula, and may agree to interview program graduates and hire the most appropriate. The training incorporates basic education and soft skills development to meet the needs of the target population. Programs may include intensive ESOL in an "English-for-Employment" model, but generic, stand-alone ESOL services unconnected to employment will not be considered responsive to this RFP. In-depth assessment ensures enrollees are appropriate; intensive case management supports them through the program and during the job placement phase; and retention services help ensure participants maintain employment (or advance) after placement. While jobs are the focus, placement into a post-secondary program leading to a career can be an acceptable outcome.
- ❖ **Transitional employment** models incorporate job readiness instruction, paid employment, intensive case management and job training. The employment is typically structured as a contract between the service provider and the employer, or as a social enterprise conducted by the service provider. These models are generally used for populations lacking work experience or facing other significant barriers to employment. By definition, the outcome for a transitional employment program is placement into unsubsidized permanent employment. In transitional employment models, the employer during the transitional phase is not typically the eventual permanent employer. A high degree of employer involvement is needed to ensure that participants are acquiring the skills employers need, and that employers are ultimately willing to hire the participants.

- ❖ **On The Job Training (OJT)**, like transitional employment, provides training by means of a job placement. However, in OJT, the expectation is that the employer providing the on-the-job training will ultimately hire the individual on a permanent basis. Wages during the training period are typically shared by the employer and the service provider. OJT lowers hiring and training costs for employers and opens doors for target populations in specific industries. Both OJT and transitional employment are expensive models due to the need to pay wages to participants; applicants are encouraged to secure matching funds to cover some or all of those costs. As with transitional employment, a high level of employer commitment is required.

The Trustees have not set specific cost guidelines for this RFP, recognizing costs vary according to program design and target population. However, budgets will be carefully reviewed for appropriate and justifiable costs per participant and per instructional hour. Cost will be one factor in making funding determinations; it will not be the only factor. If you have other financial resources available for the program you are proposing, describe them in the budget narrative.

A. Required program elements

1. Recruitment

Applicants must demonstrate in their proposal an understanding of the target population they have chosen and how to engage it. Appropriate participants can be identified via the city's one-stop career centers, DTA offices, homelessness service providers, public housing developments, community based multi-service agencies, community development corporations, community health centers, neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, regional re-entry centers and economic assistance programs. Applicants must be capable of executing a comprehensive recruitment strategy for the target population, and must show how the strategy they propose will lead to the desired level of enrollment.

2. Assessment

In order to ensure participants are successful and receive appropriate services, a thorough and in-depth assessment of the prospective participant is essential. Staff expertise in areas relevant to the target population, along with employer input about industry needs, add particular value to the assessment process. Applicants should explain the process they use to assess potential participants, the steps and tools involved, and how their assessment protocol improves the service model. Intake and assessment should flow into and directly inform case management and the delivery of services. Individuals found to be unready for the program must be referred to appropriate services. Attendance and conduct policies should be discussed with the participant at the time of the initial assessment. Termination policies must be consistent, clearly defined and publicized in writing.

3. Case management, career counseling and support services

A clear case management strategy for a coordinated response to participants' needs is essential to their success. This begins with career counseling and the development of an individual service plan based on a thorough assessment of the individual's assets and aspirations, as well as any barriers to employment. The plan must be jointly developed with the participant, and regularly reviewed by the service provider team and the participant. The plan should have clearly-stated education, employment and career goals, with projected start and end dates for all activities. Applicants should clearly demonstrate how case management is integrated into their service model. Effective case management assists participants in overcoming multiple barriers to success, including but not limited to scheduling difficulties, transportation problems, child care issues, financial challenges and motivational concerns. Case managers monitor participant attendance and performance, problem-solving with them as necessary. After job placement, staff continue to provide support as needed to ensure job retention and to address concerns employers may have.

4. Contextual learning

The purpose of this initiative is to prepare low-income individuals for employment. Many of those served will have very low educational levels. Programs are expected to utilize contextual models which combine academic and technical proficiencies, developing basic educational skills, soft skills and job skills simultaneously. How this integration is achieved is not prescribed, but all training programs should have a basic skills component which meets the needs of participants and is congruent with the target industry and occupation.

5. Employer Partnerships

A strong employer partnership is critical in any successful training venture. In a true partnership, the training provider offers services of genuine value to the employer. Training providers should be able to reduce hiring and training costs for their employer partners and eliminate some of the risk employers assume in their hiring decisions. In return, effective employer partnerships add real value to a training program. Employers should be involved in the tailoring of training designs to meet industry needs and standards. Employers can also guarantee interviews for graduates, and help training providers and participants understand their industry's HR practices. Training providers must have a Memorandum of Agreement with at least one employer. Given the instability of the economy, applicants are encouraged to find ways to engage more than one employer, and to describe how job development with multiple employers will work.

V. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

In addition to the academic and vocational goals outlined in your proposal, programs will be expected to achieve positive outcomes for at least 60% of those enrolled in the program, defined as placement into a training-related job at an average wage of at least \$13.89 per

hour, with 30-day retention. If, because of your target population, you anticipate placement rates or wages below these levels, you must provide a clear and compelling explanation as to why these performance standards should not apply to your program.

VI. PROGRAM MONITORING/REPORTING/BILLING

JCS will conduct site visits to monitor compliance and quality of services. This includes:

- Achievement of objectives in accordance with proposal and contract;
- Integrity of administrative systems and eligibility determination; and
- Quality of service evaluation through observation and informal interviews.

These monitoring activities may take the form of administrative record reviews, interviews of staff and/or participants, and general observations of the facilities, operations and training activities. Participants not adequately documented as NJT-eligible will not count towards your outcome measure. Participant files must contain the following:

1. A copy of the participant's intake form and all eligibility documentation
2. Documentation of US employment authorization
3. All assessments
4. Individual Service Plan
5. Documentation of case management and support services
6. Resume and job search records
7. Record of attendance and documentation of activities where appropriate (workshop or activity attendance record, etc.)

With some exceptions, JCS uses the state Division of Career Services MOSES database for its NJT contracts. The MOSES database is used for contractors to enter data, update client progress, report outcomes, run reports, and any other aspects of our MIS needs. If your organization is unfamiliar with MOSES, and you are selected for funding, JCS will examine your data systems and determine whether to provide MOSES training or to allow an alternative reporting system.

Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to perform administrative responsibilities including: maintaining records of participant eligibility, attendance and progress; tracking participation; and submitting program reports and invoices in a timely manner.

NJT grantees participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) E&T program of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). The NJT receives partial reimbursement from DTA for certain participants who receive SNAP benefits during training. These funds are put back into the Trust to fund future training programs. Skills training providers are expected to make referrals to DTA's SNAP program, keep SNAP enrollment documents on file, and inform JCS of participants' SNAP status.

VII. TERMS OF PROCUREMENT

Responses to this RFP must be received by JCS **no later than 5:00 p.m. on July 31, 2014.**

Late proposals will not be accepted. JCS is located at 43 Hawkins Street, Boston, 02114. Faxed or e-mailed applications will not be considered. We strongly encourage applicants to deliver their proposals in person. Submit **one signed original** and **five copies** of your proposal. It is your responsibility to ensure that all copies are identical to the original, as the copies are distributed to readers and their review will be based on the copy they are given. Provide ***one copy only*** of your most recent agency audit.

A **letter of intent** (provided as page 3 of this RFP) should be submitted by July 7, 2014. JCS may ask applicants to submit written clarifications to their proposals, and may elect to conduct site visits during the procurement process. **A bidders' conference will be held at 10:00 a.m. on June 26th in the Commonwealth Salon of the Copley Library (700 Boylston Street). Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to attend.**

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the proposal, congruence with the goals of this RFP, past program performance, geographic distribution of services, and service to target populations. The narrative portion of the proposal must be **no more than twelve pages, single-spaced**, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Point values are allocated to each section of the proposal narrative as follows:

Organizational Capacity:	20 points
Understanding of Target Population:	15 points
Program Design:	50 points
Budget and Budget Narrative: (not counted in 12-page limit)	15 points

These values are an evaluation tool; they do not dictate which proposals are ultimately recommended for funding. JCS reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive or modify any requirement contained in this RFP, to amend without consult any proposal, and to effect any agreement deemed be in the best interest of the city and its residents.

Contracts will be for a 12-month period. In issuing contracts, JCS makes no commitment for re-funding, but reserves the right to re-fund programs based on the availability of funding, program performance, organizational capacity, administrative responsiveness, and service to target populations. JCS also reserves the right to use the results of this procurement process to make funding recommendations for other funding sources.

NJT contracts are generally performance-based, contingent upon meeting enrollment and job placement goals. The Trustees expects vendors to place at least 60% of all enrollees in training-related jobs. Specific payment terms will be negotiated with successful applicants, based on the overall costs of the program and the amount of award. JCS will ensure all costs are necessary and reasonable in approving awards and negotiating final terms.

VIII. PROPOSAL SPECIFICATIONS

The original (signed) proposal must be submitted along with 5 copies. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all copies are complete. One copy of your agency's audit and/or financial statement must also be submitted. The proposal narrative must be **single-spaced**, in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. The **proposal narrative may not exceed 12 pages**, and reviewers will be instructed not to read pages in excess of twelve. This page limit does not include the one-page program summary, the budget, the budget narrative, or any required forms or attachments. The narrative should follow the order and format of the Proposal Guidelines section, which begins on the following page. Proposals must be delivered no later than **5:00 PM on July 31st** to:

**Office of Jobs and Community Services
Planning Department
43 Hawkins Street, Boston, MA 02114**

The office is located near City Hall, behind Channel 7 and the Area A police station. It is within walking distance of the State Street, Haymarket and Bowdoin subway stations. Parking in the vicinity of the office is difficult; allow extra time if you are driving.

All questions regarding this RFP should go to ken.barnes@boston.gov

Proposal Contents List

Your proposal should contain the following items, in this order:

1. Proposal Cover Sheet (provided in appendix)
2. One Page Program Summary
3. Proposal Narrative (12 pages max.)
4. Budget
5. Budget Narrative
6. Memoranda of Agreement with Employer(s)
7. Sample of Individual Service Plan
8. Syllabus and/or curriculum outline, sample lesson plan
9. Daily or weekly program schedule
10. Job descriptions and resumes
11. Any other requested attachments

IX. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

1. One-Page Program Summary

On one side of one piece of paper, briefly describe your proposed program, including specific target population, number of participants, program site(s), start and end dates, industry/employers and positions to be trained for, educational and employment outcomes, and other key features such as support services, internships, etc. Identify any partners with whom you will collaborate to offer key components of the design. This page does not count toward the 10-page limit.

2. Organizational Capacity

Briefly describe your organization's work over the past two years involving low-income or unemployed populations. Describe your experience and expertise in the following areas:

- Occupational skills training
- Job development and placement
- Counseling, case management, and post-placement services

Provide performance outcomes (enrollments and training-related job placements) for these services. Please provide a reference EDIC can contact regarding your organization's administrative capabilities.

Please describe the staffing plan for the proposed initiative. Identify by name the staff members responsible for this program, briefly describing their experience and qualifications, as well as their roles and responsibilities. Identify the staff who will manage the participant tracking system. Attach job descriptions and resumes for all positions involved in the project, noting whether they are to be funded or provided in-kind. Identify which staff and/or functions are direct service and which are administrative. Label the job descriptions with the name of the staff person, or indicate if the position is vacant.

3. Understanding of Target Population

Please describe the characteristics and needs of the specific population you intend to serve, assuming the reader is unfamiliar with the population. What are the challenges and opportunities for these individuals? How does this population differ from the general population? What direct experience have you had with members of this population and how did you accommodate their needs? Which aspects of your program are designed specifically to address the challenges faced by this population? If not everyone in your program will be from this target population (e.g. if you anticipate serving 60% ex-offenders and 40% others), describe who the rest of the participants will be. Some members of your

target population are likely to have disabilities; how will you accommodate persons with disabilities? Show evidence that there are sufficient numbers of people who would be both interested in and ready for your program.

4. Program Design

Describe in detail your proposed design for offering each of the following required components: recruitment, assessment, case management, job training, employer involvement and job placement and post-placement services. Explain how these functions, as designed, are appropriate for your target population and its needs.

A. Recruitment:

Discuss your plan for recruitment, including the specific target group you will recruit, the neighborhoods they live in, the organizations and audiences with which you will communicate, and the tools and methods you will use. List by name any Boston Housing Authority developments you will recruit from, and how you will do so. How large a pool of recruits will you need to bring into your intake process in order to identify the cohort of enrolled participants you propose to serve?

B. Assessment:

Describe the initial interview and assessment process you will use to determine individuals' academic and vocational needs and to develop an individual learning plan for each participant. Identify the specific skills assessed and the tools used, including interest inventories. What makes a candidate appropriate for the proposed training? Discuss the entry requirements (math and/or reading levels, etc.). What happens to individuals who are determined to be unready or ineligible for your program? How will you know if your participants are attaining the appropriate competencies? Describe how you will work with the individual to reach agreement on the plan and make modifications as necessary.

C. Case Management

Discuss your organization's case management system, including the range of services participants will receive through case management, and how you will maintain a strong, effective presence for participants during the assessment, training and follow-up periods. Who will provide case management? How often? Who will provide career counseling and post-placement services? What system do you use for documenting, tracking and sharing case management information?

D. Job Training:

Describe your job training program. Discuss your goals, objectives and methods for instruction in occupational training. Describe the specific competencies that your trainees will master. Attach a syllabus or curriculum outline for each instructional component, sample lesson plans, and a daily or weekly schedule of program activities. Please explain your approach to the integration of basic skills, computer skills, soft skills and vocational skills. Use examples from your curriculum to illustrate how students will learn or strengthen cognitive and technical skills in context. If you are proposing a transitional employment or OJT approach, explain how the paid employment portion of the service model is integrated with your other service elements (assessment, case management, skills training). How will participants transition into the paid experience? What is the training plan for participants during OJT or transitional employment?

E. Employer Involvement and Job Placement:

List the employers you are targeting for placement of your graduates. Identify the specific job titles (with wages) for which your participants will be competing, with a brief description of each job. Cite appropriate labor market information supporting your choice of targeted occupations. Discuss how you will prepare trainees for on-line job search and on-line applications. Provide a timeline for the process and timing of your job development, placement and retention activities. Discuss in detail the ways in which your partnerships with employers will contribute to the success of your training, job development, placement and retention efforts. Clearly define the roles and activities of the participating employer(s). Discuss the ways in which employer involvement has contributed to your curriculum and design to make them more closely linked to the skills required by the industry and job(s) for which you are training. Attach a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between your organization and the participating employer(s) outlining the responsibilities and contributions of the employer(s). The MOA must be signed by the CEO of each organization or a designee who has senior operational authority for the area of employment covered by the program.

5. Budget

- 1. Budget forms:** In your own format, give a detailed 12-month budget covering all aspects of the project. Include costs for all functions (recruitment, assessment, classroom and other instructional components, case management, job development and placement, client tracking, oversight and administration, fiscal management and oversight, reporting).
- 2. Budget narrative:** Prepare a budget narrative describing every line item and identifying clearly how each has been calculated. If you have other financial resources for this program, identify them, by source and amount, at the end of the budget narrative.