

MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

FY'2010 ARRA and WIA Occupational Skills Group Training

Request for Proposals

11/16/2009

This Request for Proposals is being released by the Division of Grants Administration as fiscal and procurement agent for the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board. The Division of Grants Administration is located at 439 South Union Street, Building #2, Suite 106, Lawrence, MA 01843

**MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FISCAL YEAR 2010 ARRA ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER OCCUPATIONAL
SKILLS GROUP TRAINING PROGRAMS**

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PART II

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

- Attachment A: FY 2010 Procurement Timeline
- Attachment B: Growth Industries and Jobs in Industrial Sectors
- Attachment C: FY 2010 MVWIB Individual Training Account Utilization
- Attachment D: Technical Package Information and Requirements

PART III

PROPOSAL CONTENTS (FORMS FOR SUBMISSION):

- Cover Sheet
- Proposal Summary Sheet
- Body of Proposal
- Budget
- Employer Chart
- Signatory Authorization for Corporate Providers or for Non-Corporate Providers
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- Certification of Non-Collusion
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- Certification of Acceptance of Technical Package
- Proposal Contents Checklist

Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS GROUP TRAINING PROGRAMS

I. Background

This Request for Proposals (RFP) was developed in response to passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Congress allocated workforce development funds through this bill to provide opportunities for eligible residents in the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment region to access employment and training services utilizing the existing infrastructure of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998.

Funding for the occupational skill training programs solicited through this RFP is provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), intended to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation's economic recovery and assist those most impacted by the recession. ARRA funding encourages creative and innovative approaches that will enhance the ability of the local and state workforce system to respond to regional economies and workforce development needs.

Bidders will need to comply with current and amended federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies including those set forth by USDOL, the Mass Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Division of Career Services and others. In particular, the provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Workforce Investment Act and its Final Rule and the decisions made by the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) will be the most relevant documents governing these funds.

II. Geographic Areas

This Request for Proposals (RFP) encompasses services to the cities and towns of the Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area. Individuals to be served with these funds must be residents of the following cities and towns:

Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Groveland, Georgetown, Methuen, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury, West Newbury and the two Gateway Cities of Haverhill and Lawrence.

III. Available Funds

The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) has set aside approximately \$600,000 in ARRA funding for group occupational skills training programs which will prepare and transition individuals upon completion into full time unsubsidized employment. It is

expected that multiple projects will be funded throughout the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment region.

All contract awards are subject to the availability of funds, and are contingent upon successful contract negotiations. Funding is for group occupational skills training programming only.

IV. Purpose

The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) formally authorized the utilization of ARRA funding for group occupational skills training at its October, 2009 Annual Meeting. Group training programs for adults and dislocated workers in our region have been unavailable since the inception of the Workforce Investment Act in 2000. The MVWIB will continue to utilize WIA funding to support Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers for customers for whom this is a more appropriate training option.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) have been utilized for the majority of skill training activities for adults and dislocated workers and this Request for Proposals is not intended to duplicate existing ITA activities. Funds available through this RFP are designed to promote and reward the development of training options in new areas with priority given to those occupations and skill areas that have been identified by the MVWIB and the State demonstrating emerging or expanding opportunities for future growth and employment opportunities.

Key Recovery Act Provisions and Emphases:

The ARRA emphasizes and encourages contracts with institutions of higher education and other training providers and the collaboration of those institutions in developing programs that utilize the expertise of several providers to build programs that will facilitate access to training for individuals at a variety of educational or occupational skill levels.

The ARRA also emphasizes serving low income, displaced and underskilled Adults and disconnected youth. Older youth in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) are defined as youth between ages 18-21, and may be included in identified populations through this solicitation.

Other emphases include the provision of reemployment services for individuals completing training and the preparation of workers for “green jobs”, (A list of identified green jobs and growth jobs in sectors can be found in Attachment B), and that connections be made where possible to other Federal Recovery Act Investments and opportunities.

Program Design Considerations:

Through this RFP the Merrimack Valley WIB is seeking a range of occupational training services and programs which are innovative and designed to meet the needs of both jobseekers and employers in today's changing economy. Specifically, we seek to meet needs which currently cannot be fully met through the existing WIA funded ITA occupational offerings that are successfully utilized by MVWIB customers.

Programs that currently receive ITAs should not expect to receive a group contract that replicates the existing program simply to serve more people. We seek services that will fill gaps in the current workforce development system and bring new training opportunities to residents of our region. The emphasis in the ARRA is on training which leads to a job; education programs are eligible only in connection with occupational skills training. A list of FY 10 ITA programs utilized this fiscal year is provided in Attachment C.

Programs developed through this RFP should be designed to provide training for individuals in a group occupational skill acquisition program for a specific job or jobs. Group training can incorporate a number of sequential activities which lead to employment in a particular area. Specifically:

- Programs funded through this solicitation will allow proposers to identify specific eligible target groups (adults, dislocated workers, women, people with disabilities, older youth) and specific entrance requirements for the proposed training.
- ABE/GED/ESOL educational remediation may be incorporated within the program design but will not be required.
- The programs **must include** the attainment of national and/or industry recognized skill or educational credentials obtained as a result of the occupational skill activity.
- Proposers **must demonstrate** the active involvement of employers in the design and operation of the program utilizing the Occupational Skills Program Employer Survey provided in the Response Section of this RFP.
- Targeted industries and occupations identified as part of the MVWIB Strategic Planning process, employer meetings and surveys will be given priority consideration for funding. (List of industries, occupations in Attachment B).
- Employability skill preparation may be included as part of the program design but is not required.

Program Design Guidelines:

Organizations responding to this RFP should describe an occupational skills training program which meets the following guidelines:

1. Enrollments/Cycles:

- ◆ The MVWIB may choose to fund programs at lower or higher enrollment levels than those proposed.
- ◆ Program activities should be planned to commence no earlier than March 1, 2010.
- ◆ All program activities including job placements must be completed no later than June 30, 2011.

2. Required Program Components:

- ◆ Outreach/Recruitment Plan (coordinated with Valley Works Career Center).
- ◆ Occupational Skills Training Plan or a combination of Education and Occupational Skills Training.

- ◆ Attainment of National and/or Industry recognized skill or educational credential.
- ◆ If a certification is required to obtain employment in the training occupation this certification must occur during the training period and associated costs if any, incorporated into the costs per participant.
- ◆ Job Development and Placement in training related area.
- ◆ Evidence of employer involvement and partnerships.

3. Programs that include Educational Remediation:

- ◆ Occupational Skill programs may include an ESOL, basic education or GED component.
- ◆ The educational curriculum should be closely related to the skills training activity and job goal.
- ◆ Incorporated educational remediation must demonstrate a connection to the actual skill training provided and meet the requirements of actual jobs available through the training.
- ◆ Occupational skill trainers are encouraged to collaborate with education providers to provide this training.
- ◆ Educational remediation should be designed to operate concurrently within the training activity or as short term intensive remediation necessary for an individual to meet entrance requirements for training.

4. Budget:

- ◆ All costs related to materials, equipment, books, uniforms, testing fees, etc. required of participants should be incorporated within the program budget.

5. Subcontracts:

- ◆ Any services to be subcontracted to another provider must receive prior approval from the MVWIB and the Division of Grants Administration. For collaborative program models the lead entity must submit a copy of the collaboration agreement within the proposal.

V. Positive Outcomes:

For participants within programs funded through this solicitation there is only one positive outcome:

Entered full time employment in a training related occupation at a negotiated minimum wage with retention for 30 days. All outcomes must occur within 90 days of the last service received by the enrollee.

VI. Partner Responsibilities:

In keeping with the spirit of an open and competitive procurement process, this RFP contains guidelines for allowable training activities and related services but does not prescribe costs, mixes of services or other specific criteria which could limit competition.

It is the purpose of this RFP to award funds to multiple bidders whose proposals, including any amendments to the proposal developed through negotiations, are most advantageous to the goals of the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB).

The MVWIB will be responsible for:

- ◆ Program promotion and technical assistance.
- ◆ Oversight and evaluation of ARRA Group Training projects.
- ◆ Final evaluation and reporting to the ARRA funding source.

The ValleyWorks Career Center (VWCC) will be responsible for:

- ◆ Assistance with outreach and recruitment of program participants.
- ◆ Eligibility determination including collecting enrollment information, eligibility documents, and determining WIA ARRA eligibility of program participants.
- ◆ Initial assessment to determine employability needs and appropriate placement.
- ◆ Ongoing case management of program participants.
- ◆ Data entry and state required MOSES report generation for the partners.
- ◆ Job Placement Assistance
- ◆ Assisting in the final evaluation and reporting for the ARRA funds.

The City of Lawrence Division of Grants Administration will be responsible for:

- ◆ Acting as fiscal agent for the MVWIB.
- ◆ Procurement and contracting for all Group Training projects.
- ◆ Project monitoring.
- ◆ Generation of Project monitoring reports for the MVWIB and VWCC.
- ◆ Ongoing compliance review with WIA and ARRA Requirements.
- ◆ Fiscal technical assistance as necessary or requested.
- ◆ Sub-recipient Fiscal Site monitoring.
- ◆ Payments and invoicing.
- ◆ Assisting in the generation of materials for the evaluation and reporting functions.
- ◆ Assisting in the final evaluation and reporting for the ARRA funds.

The partners listed above are in full agreement and are ready to successfully coordinate, operate, and ensure the successful implementation of the funded Group Training projects.

VII. Vendor/Provider Responsibilities:

Potential Vendors/Providers are requested to present program designs to meet the requirements of the ARRA funds and the locally determined program elements outlined within this RFP. Respondents to this RFP must agree to the following requirements of funding through this procurement:

- ◆ Providers will coordinate outreach and recruitment activities with the VWCC.
- ◆ Providers must work with the VWCC in the collection of required eligibility documents for participants.
- ◆ Participants may not be enrolled in program activities until determined eligible by the VWCC.
- ◆ Providers must maintain a case file for each enrollee. Each enrollee's case file must, at a minimum, contain the following:
 - ◆
 - a. Copies of any Testing Documents and Results
 - b. Copies of Attendance Records
 - c. Supportive service documentation as necessary
 - d. Documentation of participation in activities
 - e. Education or Industry recognized credential documentation
 - f. Documentation of any other skills or competency attainment in line with the program design.
- ◆ Providers must allow the MVWIB/DGA Monitors access as needed to review the program. This review will include case file review, review of activities in line with contracted program design, and fiscal monitoring.
- ◆ Providers must submit all required paperwork per contract requirements.

VIII. Other Program Requirements

Letter of Intent:

Proposers are required to submit a letter of intent indicating that they intend to apply for funds through this Request for Proposal. This letter must be received by the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board by December 14, 2009. Letters should be sent to:

MVWIB Executive Director
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union Street, Blding # 2, Suite 102
Lawrence, MA 01843

The Letter of Intent should articulate as best as possible the Lead Agency involved in the proposed program, the type of training program to be proposed, and the anticipated employer and other partners.

Program Duration:

Programs may propose to begin services starting upon contract execution. All program activities (including job placement) must be completed by June 20, 2011.

Program Enrollments:

There are no limits on total enrollments for the program design. However, depending on cost per participant and program design, the MVWIB and DGA reserve the right to fund and contract with programs at higher or lower enrollment levels than those proposed. This will be subject to contract negotiation.

IX. Eligible Applicants:

All organizations, agencies and employers interested in and capable of providing group occupational skills training that meet the requirements outlined in this RFP may submit proposals. As previously indicated programs which currently provide this training through ITAs within the region should not expect to receive a group contract to simply serve more people. We seek services which fill gaps in the current workforce development system and expand training options.

Important Note: Applicants may include institutions of higher education such as community colleges that may or may not be on the State list of eligible providers of training services. Other providers of education and/or training that are not institutions of higher education **must be on the State list of eligible providers** in order to be awarded a contract under this solicitation. The MVWIB and DGA will assist all approved proposers in completing eligibility requirements.

X. Eligible Participant/Information on Target Populations

Eligible Participants

As noted above, the VWCC will be responsible for the eligibility determination of potential participants. Eligibility must be confirmed before a participant is enrolled in the program. Eligibility to participate in programs under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is based upon the applicant meeting the Adult, Dislocated Worker or WIA Youth eligibility for WIA Title I.

Participant Assessment and Assignment

The ValleyWorks Career Center will be responsible for eligibility determination of each customer, which includes the completion of a WIA application, verification of the information provided for the application, collection of required documents, and a determination if the individual who has applied meets the eligibility criteria established by ARRA/WIA.

Each individual will undergo a full objective assessment which may include (but is not limited to) a marketability determination, an educational assessment, a review of work history, transferable skills, and an interest assessment. The VWCC staff will be responsible for making a referral to the appropriate program following the completion of the full objective assessment. No client can begin any training program without this referral. The training provider may

accept/reject a referred client if they do not meet the entry level requirements of the program or with justification based on the providers' individual assessment.

XI. Contract Terms

A. CONTRACTS:

All contracts will be cost reimbursement. Please see the Technical Package for Sample Budget/Payment Schedule and information on contracting.

ARRA Funds procured through this RFP must be expended no later than June 30, 2011. Unspent funds will be recaptured by the DGA.

B. COLLABORATING AGENCIES:

If a proposal is submitted with two or more collaborating agencies, the following information must be provided in a letter of agreement/commitment signed by the authorized signatory for each agency: Lead Agent, sub-contractual arrangement, and description of collaboration, description of continuum of services for participants, method for dispute resolution, and any other collaboration history which the agencies may have.

Collaborations must be documented as noted above, even if services from collaborating agencies (non-lead) are being provided on an in-kind basis. Services must be incorporated in the program design and collaborating agencies should strive for transparency to the participants.

C. BUDGETARY INFORMATION:

Budgets must be submitted on the forms provided. A detailed budget narrative must also be submitted explaining each line item. All budgets will be reviewed based on cost effectiveness and completeness. Post award the DGA fiscal department will work with awarded vendors to finalize budgets utilizing required contract budget forms.

D. TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

All contracts will contain WIA/ARRA Terms and Conditions. Prospective providers must agree to terms and conditions as a part of the contracting process. Please review the attached Terms and Conditions for other contract requirements (Please refer to the Technical Package)

E. DGA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

All program providers must agree and follow the DGA Grievance Procedure. Additionally, these procedures must be posted on site at the provider's location,

easily accessible to participants. Please see the attached DGA Grievance Procedure (Please refer to the Technical Package).

F. **PROVIDER PERSONNEL AND CORI CHECKS**

The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board requires that providers that receive MVWIB funds have personnel policies and procedures in place utilizing the Criminal Offender Record Information System. All program providers must certify that their agency has personnel policies in place which utilize the Criminal Offender Record Information system.

G. **DISCLAIMER**

All funded programs shall be operated in accordance with the rules under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). All programs shall also comply with the State of Massachusetts, MVWIB and DGA rules, regulations, guidelines and procedures. The MVWIB and the DGA reserve the right to modify the scope of the program and requirements to any extent necessary to ensure compliance with State and/or Federal guidelines and goals.

XII. MVWIB and Proposer's Rights

- A. The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.
- B. The proposer has the right of protest and appeal of procurement decisions. Proposers must use the protest and appeal process as outlined in the MVWIB/DGA Workforce Investment Act Grievance Procedures. Please refer to the DGA Grievance Procedures for the appeal process in the Technical Package. Appeals must be based on the Workforce Investment Act and would use the process outlined for complaint.
- C. Following the competitive procurement process, all proposals become public record.

XIII. Proposal Review Criteria

- A. *Prequalification and Financial Documentation:*
Favorable review of the pre-qualification package by DGA's Finance Director is a prerequisite to proposal review. The pre-qualification package includes:
 - Signatory Authorization for Corporate Providers or for Non-Corporate Providers

- Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters
- Evidence of Commitment to Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination, and Affirmative Action, and a Utilization Chart, if available
- Statement of Commitment to a Drug-Free Workplace
- Certification of Non-Collusion
- Certification Regarding Criminal Offender Record System
- Certification of Acceptance of the Technical Package
- Evidence of Current Approved Indirect Cost Rate
- Copy of Lease Agreement or title of ownership of the building and a copy of the most recent tax bill.
- Copy of Most Recent Audit

Note: The annual audit report must be in compliance with OMB Circular A-133, if applicable. Otherwise, an annual audit report from an Independent CPA Firm. OMB Circular A-133 Applies if the entity expends \$300,000 or more a year in federal awards. Under the revised Circular A-133, if the audit period ends after December 31, 2003, the expenditure limit Increases to \$500,000. If the agency is exempt from A-133, please have your authorized Signatory document this in writing to us. The audit report must contain the Independent Auditor's Report on Compliance and Internal Control, the Management Letter, and the Financial Statements.

Bidders whose pre-qualification packages are deemed to be incomplete or questionable following this initial review will be notified by DGA and given an opportunity to complete or correct the items in question within a timeframe that does not interfere with the proposal review schedule.

Bidders unable to respond within the allotted timeframe will be disqualified from the proposal review process.

Proposals will be reviewed by DGA and Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board staff, the MVWIB Planning Committee and the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB) in a tiered process. Final decisions on awarding funds will be made by the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board. If for any reason the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board is unable to make the decisions, the final decision for funding will be made by the Chief Elected Official of the Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area. Final agreement to contract is subject to successful contract negotiation.

Contract negotiations will be time-limited. Prospective providers must review the RFP timeline and commit to making appropriate staff available to facilitate the contract negotiation process.

DGA/MVWIB Staff Proposal Review:

1. Proposals will be reviewed and rated by DGA and MVWIB staff according to a point system. The maximum points to be earned per section are specified in the proposal content forms.
2. Programs will be reviewed for comprehensiveness, cohesiveness, and the ability to attain performance outcomes through the program design presented.
3. Proposals will be reviewed with strong consideration given to overall proposal cost, reasonableness of cost, and effective use of funding.
4. Failure to respond to a specific item or to attach requested material will result in a loss of points.

MVWIB Planning Committee Proposal Review:

Final Approval of funding recommendations and comments will be decided by the Workforce Investment Board's Planning Committee and vendors notified in February 2010. All timelines are subject to extension. DGA will notify all bidders if timelines are extended.

B. Proposals Approved for Funding:

Agencies with proposals approved for funding may be asked to submit the following additional documents:

1. Revised and Complete Budget Forms for the Cost Reimbursement Contract
2. Program Application Forms, Interview Questions, Applicant Evaluation Criteria
3. List of Instructional Materials for Each Class
4. Class Curricula
5. Class Syllabi
6. Organizational Chart
7. New Budget to Reflect Allocation (If Different from Proposed Budget)
8. Anti-Lobbying Disclosure Forms
9. Copies of Insurance Policies and Bonds
10. Staff Job Descriptions
11. List of Members of Advisory Board, if applicable
12. List (Or Copies) of Testing Instruments

XIV. Proposal Format

Proposals must be typewritten or word processed on the attached forms. Responding agencies should ensure that their proposals conform to the following requirements:

- A response to each item of the proposal forms is required. Responses should be as concise as possible.
- DGA strongly prefers that bidders adhere to the space allowed in the forms. However, if you must make a lengthier response to a specific item, please insert a page and continue the item response on the inserted page, so that the pagination of the original forms is maintained. **Please do not alter the format of or make inserts to the Proposal Summary Sheet**, since this page is excerpted from the proposal for various purposes.
- Please do not use a font size less than **11 pt** within the Response Forms. Attachments should also utilize 11 pt. if possible, with exceptions allowable for charts, timelines, etc.
- **Please check your proposal for internal consistency.**
- Some sections may require appended material. Failure to enclose this material or to respond to a specific item will result in a loss of points for the section.
- The Cover Sheet and Proposal Summary Sheet must be page one and two of your proposals. **Please order proposal sections according to the attached Proposal Contents Check List.**
- **The Cover Sheet must be signed by the Authorized Signatory of the Lead Agency, as documented through the Authorized Signatory form submitted.**

Proposals must adhere to format provided. If there are any questions please contact Amy Weatherbee, Systems & Planning Director, DGA at 978-722-7002.

XV. Proposal Submission

The submission must consist of **AN UNBOUND ORIGINAL AND SIX (6) BOUND COPIES**. Failure to submit the unbound original and six (6) bound copies will result in disqualification. The original **MUST** contain the signature of your agency signatory. All proposals must incorporate completed proposal summary sheets and required forms. **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE RFP FORMAT MAY RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION.**

PROPOSALS ARE DUE ON JANUARY 11, 2010 NO LATER THAN 2:00 P.M.

AT

**DIVISION OF GRANTS ADMINISTRATION
c/o VALLEYWORKS CAREER CENTER
439 South Union Street, Building # 2, Suite # 106
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Delivery of proposals is the sole responsibility of the proposer. The transmission of proposals by fax is not permitted. It is the sole responsibility of the bidder to ensure that proposals are received at the proper location, prior to the stated deadline. Some transportation lines are congested, and visitors or on-street parking can at times be difficult to obtain. Proposals will be logged in and stamped with the time and date of receipt. Bidders should plan accordingly for timely proposal delivery. The **2:00 p.m.** deadline will be strictly enforced. Proposals or any parts thereof received after the required date and time will not be accepted and will be rejected as non-responsive to the Request for Proposals.

There will be a Bidders' Conference on Friday, November 20th at 1:00 p.m. at the Valley Works Career Center, 439 South Union Street, Building #2, Suite # 106, Lawrence, MA 01843. The proposal will have been released and the Bidders' Conference will be geared toward clarification of submission requirements and local priorities. All interested parties are invited to attend, although attendance is not mandatory.

Please note that to maintain a competitive bidding process, substantive question (e.g., concerning program design) arising during the proposal preparation period will be addressed only during the Technical Assistance period. No program design questions will be addressed following the release of the RFP. Technical assistance (e.g., clarification on completion of the proposal document) will be available throughout the proposal preparation period by contacting Amy Weatherbee, DGA Systems and Planning Director via email: aweatherbee@detma.org or (978) 722-7002. Questions will be entertained up through Monday, January 4, 2010-, and responses will be posted on the MVWIB website, www.mvwib.org.