

Building Quality Requests for Proposals for WIOA Youth Program Services

Have you ever wondered what to include in your Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth program request for proposals (RFPs)? This brief will help. The WIOA Youth program provides a great deal of flexibility in designing programs and services. The RFP serves as a strategic tool that helps state and local workforce development boards (WDB) realize its vision for youth service delivery. This brief includes links to RFPs from across the country that you may consider when developing an RFP to procure WIOA Youth program services.

Background

Title I of WIOA allocates formula funds to states and outlying areas to provide local workforce areas resources to deliver comprehensive youth services to eligible youth. These services assist out-of-school youth (OSY) and in-school youth (ISY) with one or more barriers to employment in preparing for postsecondary education and employment opportunities, attaining educational and/or skills training credentials, and securing employment with career/promotional opportunities. Funds are used to develop WIOA youth programs to improve the long-term job prospects of young people giving them basic educational, occupational, and citizenship skills. For an overview of the WIOA Youth formula-funded programs and policies, check out the [WIOA Youth Program Reference Tool](#).

Local workforce development boards (WDBs) have responsibility for oversight of WIOA Youth programs. One of the responsibilities of local WDBs or a designated youth committee includes selection of WIOA youth providers through competitive grants or contracts. Competition is expected to improve the delivery of efficient, effective youth workforce services. When a local WDB awards grants or contracts to youth service providers to carry out youth workforce investment activities, it must identify youth service providers based on criteria established in the State Plan and take into consideration the ability of the provider to meet performance accountability measures based on the primary indicators of performance for youth programs. Consistent with 20 CFR § 681.400, a local WDB may determine that the grant recipient or designated fiscal agent may “provide directly some or all of the youth workforce investment activities.” Additional information on competitive procurement can be found in [TEGL 21-16](#).

KEY ELEMENTS OF A QUALITY RFP

When developing an RFP, it is important to ensure vendors have a clear picture of the vision, program design, program activities and services, and anticipated outcomes. While there is no perfect template or outline for an RFP, there are key elements found in most quality RFPs. These include:

- **Vision:** A high-quality RFP lays out a clear vision for youth services that aligns with the strategic vision and goals identified in the WIOA state and local plans. It provides the local WDB the opportunity to implement the workforce development, education, and training goals laid out in the plans. The RFP also reflects how the WDB expects investments around workforce and education to connect youth to locally available career pathways. It articulates the youth population(s) to target, the partnerships to develop and/or strengthen, and the desired participant outcomes.
- **Program Design:** The program design describes how the vision will operate. This section clarifies how assessments, individual service strategies, the 14 program elements, and career pathways opportunities will be delivered and how those services fit into the overall local area strategy. The RFP should clarify if it is seeking a vendor(s) to provide the full array of WIOA Youth program services or only some of the services. If the RFP is only procuring some of the services, it should describe the coordination of services with other community organizations, vendors, or the local WDB. It also explains the local WDB's expectations around delivering objective assessments and developing individual service strategies for participants.
- **Scope of Services:** The scope of services articulates exactly what activities and program elements will be procured through the RFP.
- **Budget:** The RFP should solicit sufficient details to determine the accuracy and reasonableness of the vendor's cost projections. The budget narrative should outline estimated costs that align with the proposed program design, services, and activities. Costs that local WDBs may want to consider in the proposed budget narrative include: program staff wages and fringe benefits; travel; supplies; materials; training costs; work experience wages; stipends; and incentives. Leveraged costs and indirect costs should be requested.
- **Policy:** A quality RFP incorporates program and policy expectations and ensures vendors understand the WIOA Youth program statutory and regulatory requirements, and any other Federal, state, and local policies impacting youth program operations.
- **Partnerships:** Building on the RFP's vision, this section describes the strategies for leveraging resources and the expectations around vendor partnerships. It should request vendors to identify partners they will work with to help youth achieve successful outcomes. Local WDBs are not required to procure all 14 program elements through a competitive process; therefore, the RFP might allow vendors to propose to collaborate with other organizations in order to leverage available resources in the community.
- **Performance Outcomes and Reporting:** Another important aspect of the RFP is clarifying the required youth performance measures. Local WDBs are required to negotiate performance levels for these measures with the state. In order to meet those negotiated levels, the RFP should incorporate performance indicators that will be used to measure the success of the youth served by the program, set minimum standards and targets for those measures, and outline expectations for reporting on those indicators.

- **Evaluation, Audit and Fiscal Reporting and Monitoring:** The RFP should clarify the expectations around evaluation of program activities, audits, fiscal reporting, and any other minimum standards included in the contract so vendors know up front what activities are involved if selected. It should also lay out how the local WDB will monitor the vendor, and that it may include on-site reviews, interviews with staff, and formal evaluations of compliance.
- **Terms and Conditions:** The RFP should make terms and conditions concise. Vendors need to understand all the terms and conditions that apply to the use of WIOA funds.

Examples of RFPs

To view examples of state and local WDB RFPs, [click here](#). These samples represent different approaches for acquiring WIOA Youth program providers and services. ***(DISCLAIMER) The proposals listed are intended for informational purposes only. DOL does not endorse any of the RFP samples provided in this technical assistance resource.***