Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA)

RFP Scope 3 - Career Navigator

Wayne County Workforce Development Initiative (WCWDI)

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SEMCA has issued this Request for Proposal (RFP) to secure contractors for the delivery of Workforce Development Services under the Wayne County Workforce Development Initiative, funded by the Coronavirus State and Local Federal Relief Funds. Bidders may submit a proposal to provide Career Navigator Services in Wayne County. This RFP will distribute the SLFRF funds for the Career Navigator program; The target industries for this program include:

- Mobility & Automotive
- Logistics
- Smart Manufacturing
- Research, Engineering & Design
- Digital Technology
- Corporate & Professional Services
- Financial Services
- Green Jobs

**Funding**
The Wayne County Economic Development Division is investing a total of $50 million dollars across four Workforce Development Programs, of which the Career Navigator is one of the four. It is the intention that funds for the Career Navigator Program will flow from Wayne County through the program administrator and service providers in order to serve eligible residents. The majority of the funding for this program area is dedicated to staffing and related expense.

Eligible costs include career navigation assistance to individuals that are currently unemployed or employed but are seeking to move to a job that provides better opportunities for economic advancement, such as higher wages or more opportunities for career advancement. Examples of eligible costs include:

- Staff time to administer Initial assessment of interests, skill levels & supportive service needs & costs related to the assessment tools.
- Job search assistance
- Miscellaneous direct training costs
- Follow up services to collect outcome information
- English language learning
- Other assessment and testing
- Referral to employment supporting adjacent services
Career Navigator
The purpose of this program is to reduce barriers to employment, create career pathways, and drive industry growth to help individuals in Wayne County obtain and retain employment. More specifically, the Career Navigator Program will provide intake services, case management and career planning services to help bridge the gaps between jobseekers, service providers, education providers, and employers. The Program Administrator and service providers will work with Wayne County to help program participants identify their strengths, skills, and interests and connect them with appropriate opportunities, maximize the efficacy, reach, and utilization of available resources, bridge the gap between employers, service providers, education providers, the workforce, and develop career pathways that serve as a roadmap for placing individuals into high-quality jobs.

The service providers for this program will be the service providers selected to deliver the other three WCWDI programs. This provision will integrate career navigation functions across all programs in the WCWDI. This program will operate for three (3) years or until funds are depleted. The goal of this program that sixty percent (60%) of program participants becoming employed within one of the County’s target industry clusters as a result of program participation. The target industries for this program include:

- Mobility & Automotive
- Logistics
- Smart Manufacturing
- Research, Engineering & Design
- Digital Technology
- Corporate & Professional Services
- Financial Services
- Green Jobs

Program Features
The Career Navigator Program is a central hub of the WCWDI programs. The Navigator will connect participants to WCWDI service and training providers. All WCWDI service providers will receive funding for a Career Navigator position to perform the services defined in the Career Navigator program.

Selected service providers will provide intake services, case management and deliver program services to participants. More specifically, program service provider partners will help program participants develop career pathways by delivering goal-setting exercises, skill assessments, career exploration workshops, and interest assessments; help program participants secure employment by providing job attainment services; and
refer program participants to existing supportive services, training opportunities, educational institutions, and employers, as needed.

Selected service providers will provide employment preparedness services for jobseekers. This includes interview preparation, cover letter and resume editing, job readiness checklists, and skill-gap identification, as well as referral to other needed services and resources, such as GED prep, housing assistance, mental health services, etc. Program participants will follow the program administrator’s intake process in order to confirm eligibility.

**Career Navigator Service Provision:**
Career Navigators will serve as the link between the 4 programs operated by WCWDI, making sure program participants get connected to the correct programs and resources. Key duties include:

**Service Delivery**
- Screen participants’ experiences, competencies, transferable skills, digital literacy, and interests to evaluate compatibility with training opportunities and job openings
- Help participants explore career options by understanding in-demand jobs, occupational requirements & characteristics, available trainings, and career pathways
- Develop career pathways by delivering goal-setting exercises, career exploration workshops, and interest assessments
- Refer individuals to existing supportive services, training opportunities, educational institutions, and employers across Wayne County
- Help individuals secure employment by providing job attainment services such as the preparation of resumes, cover letters, and job interviews
- Ensure the needs of eligible program participants with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and returning citizens, are addressed when providing access to services

**Program Outreach**
- Support efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and individuals in the region to promote program participation
- Participate in outreach efforts to attract a higher percentage of underrepresented populations
- Show how data, research, or community engagement methods have informed their work as part of reporting metrics

**Program Administration**
- Establish internal program management procedures to assure compliance with contract requirements, delivery of high-quality services to eligible individuals, and achievement of planned outcomes
• Adhere to Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) reporting and guidance requirements as featured in the Final Rule and Compliance and Reporting Guidance released by the U.S. Department of Treasury

**Eligibility Requirements**
These requirements are aligned to the ARPA requirements for communities impacted by COVID-19. These requirements will be aligned to the ARPA requirements for disproportionately affected communities by COVID-19. 75% of funds must be used to assist individuals impacted by COVID-19 who were living in Wayne County in 2020 and 2021.

**Program Participants**
Individuals who are 18 years of age or older, reside in Wayne County, and who meet the following criteria are eligible for the Career Navigator Program:

 o Individuals who are currently unemployed or underemployed.
   - There is a preference for individuals who are upskilling within or seeking employment in one of the target industry clusters.

OR

 o Individuals who are otherwise disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, as demonstrated by one or more of the following criteria. Note: There is a preference for individuals who are upskilling within or seeking employment in one of the target industry clusters.
   - Low-income individuals
     ▪ Low income is defined as:
       (i) income at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) for the size of its household based on the most recently published poverty guidelines by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
       (ii) or income at or below 40 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for Wayne County and size of household based on the most recently published data by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
   - Individuals residing in Qualified Census Tracts
   - Individuals who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 itself or the harmful consequences of the economic disruptions resulting from or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency
     ▪ For example, an individual who lost their job during a period of closure would both have experienced impacts of the pandemic
Outreach and Recruitment
Potential contractor(s) shall conduct outreach and recruitment efforts throughout Wayne County to inform communities and stakeholders of the benefits of the workforce initiative. Regular community outreach & engagement with community stakeholders is necessary to reach required performance targets and should be done in coordination with the Wayne County Initiative (See General Requirements document for details). Outreach shall be coordinated in conjunction with other contractor(s) secured through this RFP.

Intake and Initial Eligibility
The intake and referral process, including initial eligibility determination, will be as simple and as accelerated as possible. Since any potential participant might first start out at a variety of entry points including at another agency or at an education/training provider, it is imperative to have strong local collaboration with key partners. The Intake and Initial Eligibility service function will consequently need to be communicated and coordinated in order to ensure a smooth identification and referral of clients to career coaching and other services. SEMCA Administrative staff will conduct the final eligibility determination for all participants, which includes criteria required by applicable laws and regulation.

Career Coaching
Career coaching services will be provided to ensure that job seekers are efficiently provided with career assistance, including accessing education and training options; job-ready preparation for entry into new employment; and career exploration and career decision making activities. While facilitating customer choice, staff will also advise customers on how their proposed plans align with marketplace reality and state and federal program requirements.

Assessment
Assessment services are often required to properly align job seekers to employment and/or training. Assessments must provide participants with disabilities with reasonable accommodations, as appropriate.

Where potential contractor(s) lack internal assessment resources, they will be expected to collaborate with or source additional assessment resources and services externally.

Customer Tracking
Contractors will be required to use Launchpad to record and track job seeker and employer activities and program services. Contractors may also be required to input information into other systems, pending further guidance from SEMCA.

Performance
The proposal must state how many participants you intend to serve, with the goal of sixty percent (60%) of program participants becoming employed within one of the County’s target industry clusters within one year (1) after program enrollment.
SCOPE OF WORK PROPOSAL QUESTIONS

Responses below must not exceed two pages for each of the following 5 sections.

1. **Experience and Service Delivery**
   Contractor Experience and Innovation
   - Describe your agency’s experience providing workforce development services? (If your agency/organization does not have previous experience, describe your experience with similar programming.) Provide the number of customers served and the outcomes achieved compared to the performance expectations of the funding source for the past three years of programming.
   - What experience do you have working with other organizations to deliver coordinated or wrap around services to participants. Please provide details.
   - What experience do you have working directly with businesses or employers to meet their talent needs? Please specify industries and populations you target and timeframe of work.
   - Provide information on the qualifications, tenure and experience of key staff who will implement this program, including language capabilities.

2. **Program Design**
   - Describe the strategies for conducting outreach and recruitment make the community aware of these programs. Highlight any local partner organizations that will be key in outreach and recruitment strategies and the methods the proposing organization will use to work with them.
   - Describe your systems for entering participant data into data systems and maintaining oversight on completeness, accuracy and security of the data.
   - Describe how the proposing organization will manage referral to other WCWDI programs or other area resources.
   - Describe how the proposing organization will help participants evaluate their career options, in light of their preferences, aptitude and skills.
   - Describe innovative ways you will collaborate between agencies and/or programs to expand services to underserved populations, reduce overhead, and avoid duplication of effort and to identify gaps in services?

3. **Performance Outcomes & Continuous Improvement**
   - Describe how you will measure customer satisfaction for program participants.
• Provide data on past performance providing similar services using State or Federal funds.
• Describe your organization’s ability to manage your proposed program to ensure attainment of all program goals.
• Describe your plan and capability to respond to all SEMCA reporting requirements on a timely basis. Specificity is desired.
• If awarded this project in the first quarter of 2023, what are the key activities in the first 90 days to operationalize your plan?

4. **Administrative/Management Capacity**
   • Provide some background on your organization, including number of years in operation. Within your organizational structure, describe how this program would be administered.
   • Explain plans for the hiring and selection of staff, supervision and management of staff, program activities. Provide information on the qualifications and relevant experience of staff on this project.
   • Please provide your organization’s policies and practices related to Equal Opportunity and persons with disabilities.
   • Please describe your experiences with programs governed by federal and state regulations, including ARPA and CARES act, if relevant
   • Specify outcomes of the program(s) delineated as well as any audit and/or monitoring findings made known.

5. **Financial Management**
   • Describe the grant accounting experience of key fiscal staff who will be assigned to this project.
   • Describe key grant management and reporting processes used by your team to comply with mandatory reporting requirements.
   • Submit the prior two (2) fiscal year financial and/or single audit reports. (If bidding for multiple programs, please only submit once)
   • Complete the risk Assessment Tool
   • Submit a budget and budget narrative per the schedule in Appendix “A”. The budget narrative should identify the line items indicated in the overall budget and describe and justify the expenses included in the line-item budget.
   • The bidder should also describe how funding will be integrated with other financial and non-financial resources to achieve maximum benefit to the customer. Identity all leveraged resources with specificity.

All administrative expenses (direct charged or indirect allocations) are capped at 10% of the total amount of the budget unless a Federally Approved Indirect Rate letter is submitted with the response.
Evaluation Criteria Specifications:

- Language Capabilities: 1 Point for each language selected (excluding "English"), 1 additional point for "Other" (even if several additional languages are listed)
- Industry Clusters: 1 Point for each category selected (excluding "none")
- Target Populations Served: 2 Points for each populations selected (excluding "other")
- Federal Grant Funding Experience: 0 to 4 points
- ARPA & CARES Funding Familiarity: 0 to 4 points
- Grant Accounting Experience: 0 to 2 points
- Career Services Experience: 0 to 2 points
- SEMCA Pre-Award Risk-Based Assessment Tool Score: 0 to 3 points
  - Outstanding Monitoring or Audit issues and/or Conflicts of Interest may lead to potential disqualification
- Experience and Expertise of Project Team 0-5
- Past Performance of Organization: 0-5 points based on the relevance and impact of the organization's experience in operating similar programs.
- Grant Management and Reporting: 0-5 points based on the organization's ability to comply with all mandatory reporting requirements.
- Placement Services Experience: 0 to 5 points
- Program Approach: 0 to 5 points, based on approach to project and demonstrated ability to provide all required services.
- Marketing and Outreach: 0 to 5 points based on organization’s strategy to reach and enroll program participants
- Skills and Capacity: 0 to 5 points based on organization’s resources and skills that allow them to act as program partner.
- Cost Proposal: 0 to 5 points based on budget, including detail on specific expense categories and funding breakdown, including reasonableness of cost per participant to be served.

SEMCA reserves the right to consider factors outside of this RFP that it deems relevant in making its final selection of contractor(s) that will serve the best interest of SEMCA’s mission, its customers and the communities it serves. Contract(s) may be terminated immediately if funding is terminated.

Final awards are subject to approval by the Wayne County Commission.