

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

DATE: November 30, 2015

SUBJECT: RFQ #15-08: Request for Qualifications for Cohort-Based Training in Healthcare

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

In October 2015 the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County (WDC) was selected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as a grant-funded partner in round 2 of its national Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) initiative. This grant will support the King County Health Workforce for the Future (HWF) project designed to build from lessons learned in the first round of HPOG. The WDC is seeking qualified training partners to implement a collaborative effort under this initiative that enhances educational and employment outcomes in the healthcare field for TANF recipients and other low-income youth and adults. To this end, the WDC is issuing RFQ# 15-08 to solicit qualifications from training providers for **existing** training that meets the purpose, goals, and scope outlined below. The WDC is also issuing a companion solicitation, RFP #15-09, seeking proposals for the development of new curriculum and approaches to address gaps in current training offerings. Eligible applicants may choose to submit responses under either or both solicitations.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The WDC seeks responses from multiple training institutions, such as community/technical colleges, 4-year universities, registered apprenticeship programs, and other providers of training that have the expertise and capacity to implement cohort-based training¹ that prepares individuals for jobs in the healthcare field. The HWF project will use lessons learned from previous initiatives, and findings from local and national research to leverage, redesign, and enhance existing training and program strategies to reach (1) individuals who remain unemployed, or have tenuous connections to the workforce, despite the improving economy. In order to ensure true momentum on a career path is possible, this project will also focus on (2) individuals who are working

¹ Cohort-based training allows an entire class of job seekers to be recruited and enrolled in training as a group. Cohort training enhances interpersonal interaction, can create strong group identification and increase support, and often prepares students for professions using internship models.

and meet the eligibility criteria described below, to improve ability of entry-level incumbents to successfully combine work and training for more advanced healthcare occupations. Finally, the project will target (3) low-income youth² who are critical to the future workforce but remain even more disconnected from the labor force. The focus of this RFQ is to identify training that is currently developed and available for purchase, and aligns with the training needs of the target population and overall project goals. It is the WDC's intent to purchase the first training cohorts under this HHS-funded project between March and September of 2015, and expects funding to be available for additional cohort purchases in subsequent years of the 5-year HWF project.

BACKGROUND & SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUESTED

Labor market data, demographic data, and employer projections provide compelling evidence of a critical need for a more robust pipeline to build the future healthcare workforce in King County. Despite the improving and relatively strong local economy, the King County Executive's Office has documented substantial disparities "by race and by place." King County communities most impacted by this disparity face unemployment rates nearly four times greater than those least impacted, and more than half the population in these adversely impacted communities is living at or near poverty (household income less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level). Individuals in the most impacted communities also experience much worse mental and physical health outcomes, and are among the most racially and linguistically diverse in King County.³ In short, while participation of the youth and adults living in these communities will be critically important to building the future healthcare workforce in King County, they face some of the greatest barriers to entry. Employer partners indicate that a more diverse health workforce is needed to meet the mental and physical health needs of the increasingly diverse population within King County. However, English language skills, poverty, stress, and health status all impact an individual's ability to access and successfully participate in employment and training. Therefore, many desirable candidates for that future workforce will go untapped without enhanced strategies and infrastructure.

The HWF project is designed to address these pipeline issues and invest in this infrastructure. Individuals enrolled in HWF will be supported by grant-funded "Navigators" to enroll and participate in training via "slot-in" funded through individual training account (ITA) vouchers and/or **cohort-based training**.⁴ It is expected that

² It is assumed that the majority of participants actively enrolled in HWF will be 18 years or older; however, there is an expectation that HWF will work closely with WIOA youth and other youth providers in the community to provide exposure and career exploration opportunities for younger youth and to promote smooth transitions to healthcare training and employment for youth and young adults who determine the field is a fit for them.

³ King County Equity and Social Justice Annual Report. November 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice.aspx>

⁴ This solicitation is focused on cohort-based training only; ITAs will be administered by HWF Navigators on an individual customer basis, much as they are in the WDC's other workforce programs.

participants will engage in training at appropriate levels from pre-college or “foundational” level, entry-level, and more advanced levels to prepare them for occupations along targeted training pathways.

In response to the needs of the target population and employer demand, education and training activities under the HWF project will be organized around several **pathways**, particularly nursing, medical assisting/office, and diagnostic/therapeutic occupations. Employer partners report that the push of healthcare reform toward a more prevention-oriented focus, changes in the economic model of the healthcare sector, and demographic shifts in the patient population put new demands on the health workforce. Accordingly, local employers have emerging priorities around increasing workforce diversity, and expect growth beyond what labor market data (LMI) alone might predict in many areas. Employer partners tracking population health trends suggest, for example, that the compound effect of an aging population and increased incidence of chronic disease will likely fuel more demand for **diagnostic and therapeutic services**, and therefore greater growth than might otherwise be projected for occupational and physical therapist assistants and aides, respiratory therapists, phlebotomists, medical lab techs, cardiovascular techs, etc. Furthermore, the current workforce in these occupations is characteristic of the broader healthcare industry in its lack of diversity; for example, 80% of local occupational and physical therapy assistants in 2014 were white.⁵ In addition, with Medicare expansion in Washington State, and the demand for primary care increasing and expected to continue to grow, employers have expressed concern about the future workforce for key occupations in that setting, such as **nurses** and **medical assistants**. Similar to the occupations above, the current nursing workforce is 75% white and 90% female, and the current MA workforce nearly 70% white.⁶

Under this solicitation, the WDC is looking to purchase training cohorts, as appropriate, for training along these pathways. Specific occupations targeted are detailed in Appendix A; the WDC will consider training for other healthcare occupations along or outside these pathways to the extent it is aligned with the needs of the target population and overall HWF project goals. It is expected that programs proposed under this solicitation will employ practices with demonstrated promise for promoting access, persistence, and successful completion for the target population and that are responsive to diverse learning styles and needs. For example, use of “**bridge**” courses that integrate basic skills and foundational healthcare content and/or pre-requisite coursework to help students efficiently prepare for successful participation in occupational training; models that integrate **innovative instructional delivery**

⁵ EMSI Q1 2015 Data Set, Occupation Overview, Occupational Therapy Assistants, Occupational Therapy Aides, Physical Therapist Assistants, and Physical Therapist Aides in Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA. Retrieved on May 12, 2015 via subscription to EMSI Analyst (www.economicmodeling.com).

⁶ EMSI Q1 2015 Data Set, Occupation Overview, Medical Assistants in Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA. Retrieved on May 12, 2015 via subscription to EMSI Analyst (www.economicmodeling.com).

approaches (e.g., “flipped learning”⁷, hands-on and work-based learning opportunities, multiple modalities for students to demonstrate learning/competencies, etc.), **additional instructional support** (facilitated review sessions, specialized tutoring, etc.), **peer support**, etc.; strategies that “**package**” **pre-requisite coursework** to expedite training and employment progression; strategies for promoting **efficient re-entry** when students have to stop out, and/or **accelerated entry** with credit for prior learning; **dual-credential** approaches to increase employment competitiveness, etc.

As mentioned above, responses to this solicitation should include existing training programs available for purchase. However, training providers **may also propose curriculum redesign, new approaches to instructional delivery, or new curriculum development to address gaps in training offerings and/or articulation under a companion solicitation, RFP #15-09.**

TARGET POPULATION

The HWF project will **target (1)** individuals who are unemployed, or remain under/unstably employed, despite the improving economy, **(2)** incumbent workers in need of support for wage and career progression, and **(3)** youth in King County households with **earned income below the self-sufficiency threshold** for their family type (as defined by the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State⁸). This will include a focus on TANF recipients as well as other low-income youth and adults. Focusing simultaneously on these groups will ensure the project’s ability to develop a continuum of effective strategies to engage those who are underutilized in the labor market and support better employment outcomes and more fluid progress on career pathways. Eligible applicants will be selected to participate in a national evaluation via random assignment⁹, conducted by HWF Navigators. Eligibility determination, intake and enrollment will be completed by HWF Navigators, funded separate from this solicitation.

ELIGIBILITY

King County training institutions, such as public/community or technical colleges, 4-year universities, registered apprenticeship programs, and other providers of healthcare training.

⁷ Per Abeysekera, Lakmal, and Phillip Dawson (2015), flipped classroom is an instructional strategy and type of blended learning that reverses the traditional educational arrangement by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom and moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom. Retrieved from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flipped_classroom

⁸ The [Self-Sufficiency Standard](#) is a wage threshold informed by cost of living data by family size, composition and location; it provides a benchmark of what families need to earn to meet basic household expenses without any public or private subsidies.

⁹ As a condition of HHS HPOG round 2 funding, all grantees are required to participate in the federal evaluation, including random assignment, which involves entering eligible individuals into a lottery to determine if they will be invited to participate in the program.

RESPONSE CONTENT & FORMAT

Partners interested in submitting a response should use the following format:

A. Identifying Information

- Please include organization/institution name, address, and web page URL (if applicable), as well as name/title, phone number, and email address for primary contact for responding organization.

B. Program Design/Qualifications

- Please describe in detail the specific training program/classes you are including in your response. In your description, please include an overview of the curriculum, intended learning outcome(s), program length (time/credits), work-based learning components, such as clinical placement/ internship/externship, etc. [*Note: Applicants may submit one or more programs that pertain to this RFQ in a single response.*]
- Please describe how the training meets the needs of the target population, and, if applicable, the particular segment of the target population the training is designed to serve (e.g., youth, incumbent workers, unemployed, TANF, LEP, etc.). Please specify the training design elements/instructional delivery approaches included that align with the diverse learning needs of the population targeted by HWF and with the overall goals of the HWF project.
- Please describe how you have assessed industry demand for your program's graduates, and the extent to which employers have been involved in the development and/or validation of your curriculum.
- Describe the occupation(s) the training prepares successful completers to obtain, which types of employers are hiring for that occupation (e.g., hospitals/acute care, clinics, community/public health, long-term care, etc.), and particular strategies to enhance work readiness and competitiveness of program completers.
- Describe the certificate/credential(s)/licensure that will be attained by program graduates and how it is recognized by employers (or, in the case of "foundational" or pre-college level training, what the expected training outcome is and what the next step(s) are for training completers).
- Indicate how the proposed training articulates to next level training, including specifics about which next level training(s).
- Describe the track record of the proposed training: number served annually, completion rate, credential rate, job attainment rate, and average wage upon job placement.
- Please indicate your organization's capacity and preferred timeline for offering the training included in your response, i.e., minimum/maximum/ideal number of students per cohort, how soon/when the training could be offered, how many times per year a cohort could start, etc. Please specify whether the training could be offered during the first year of the HWF project (cohort start date

between March and September 2016), and/or if it would be available for purchase in subsequent years of the project.

C. Cost Proposal

- For each training program proposed, please use **Attachment 1** to detail pertinent costs including instruction, tuition, other student costs, facilities costs, etc. ***Please note that no funds released under this solicitation may be used to pay participant wages of any kind.***
- In the **budget narrative**, please provide detail for each of the funding categories included in Attachment 1, and also describe the necessary enrollments for the course to qualify for state-funded support of the instructor portion of the training, if applicable.

Please limit your response to no more than four (4) pages single spaced, per proposed training program, excluding the cost proposal. Please submit as many programs as you feel are appropriate given the guidelines of this RFQ. Include a separate cost proposal for each proposed program (please note: Attachment 1 does not count toward the page limit above, but each cost proposal should be no more than 2 pages including both budget and budget narrative).

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

The WDC will use the following criteria to guide training selection in the immediate term:

- Employer demand (within and across segments of the healthcare industry, e.g., acute care, long-term care, community/public health, etc.)
- Current supply of training graduates in particular occupations (including supply from regular community and technical college offerings, other training providers, and special initiatives such as foundation, grant, and industry-funded cohorts)
- Completeness and clarity of respondents in addressing the program design elements and requirements requested under Response Content & Format above
- Fit with target population in general, and the needs of early participant enrollments in particular
- Alignment with overall project goals
- Promotion of smooth articulations to and from successive levels of training
- Demonstrated quality and track-record of training, including success of training graduates and employer support for the training
- Cost effectiveness

The WDC makes no commitment to contract with training providers responding to this solicitation, but will consider utilizing providers whose qualifications are verified through this RFQ for immediate as well as future training needs.

VIII. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on January 15, 2016. Proposals may be submitted in hard copy or electronically in PDF format. If submitting in hard copy, please mail or hand deliver to:

Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County
Attn: RFQ #15-08
2003 Western Avenue, Suite 250
Seattle, WA 98121-2162

Electronic submissions should be submitted via email to operations@seakingwdc.org, with RFQ #15-08 in the subject line. Please note, respondents who are planning to submit electronically are advised to research server file size or other restrictions in advance to avoid technical problems that might prevent successful on-time submission.

Late responses will not be considered. The WDC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to accept or reject any or all items in the proposal, and to award the contract(s) in whole or in part as is deemed to be in the best interests of the WDC. The WDC reserves the right to negotiate with any or all bidders on modifications to proposals and/or integration of components across proposals to achieve maximum efficiency. *Award contingent on available funds.*

IX. BIDDERS CONFERENCE & QUESTIONS

A joint Bidder's Conference for RFQ #15-08 and companion solicitation RFP #15-09 will be held on December 9, 2015, 10:00-11:30am, at the offices of the WDC: 2003 Western Ave, Suite 250, Seattle, WA 98121. Due to space limitations, the WDC requests that interested parties planning to attend the Bidder's Conference please limit attendees to **one representative per organization.**

Questions may be emailed to operations@seakingwdc.org. Please put **RFQ #15-08** in the subject line. Questions must be submitted to the WDC by **December 14, 2015.** Questions will not be answered by phone. All questions and answers will be posted on our website (www.seakingwdc.org). Bidders are advised to regularly visit the WDC website as it will be the WDC's sole means of communicating with bidders before the proposal due date.

The Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council is an equal opportunity employer and provider of employment and training services.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

WTRS 711.

APPENDIX A: HWF TARGETED OCCUPATIONS

PATHWAY	OCCUPATION
<i>Nursing</i>	Home Health Aide
	Nursing Assistant
	Licensed Practical Nurse
	Registered Nurse
<i>Medical Office/Medical Assistant</i>	Medical Assistant
	Medical Secretary
<i>Diagnostic/Therapeutic</i>	Phlebotomist
	Medical Lab Tech
	Cardiovascular Tech
	Diagnostic Medical Sonographer
	Pharmacy Tech
	Surgical Tech
	Physical Therapy Aide/Assistant
	Occupational Therapy Aide/Assistant
	Respiratory Therapy