

**Workforce Investment Act Services
Request for Letter of Intent to Bid
PY 2014 (July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015)
High Country WDB**

Preliminary Specifications for Services

The High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) intends to request bids for the delivery of services for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult and Dislocated Workers, and Youth customers based on receipt of Letters of Intent for Watauga County, North Carolina.

The HCWDB is issuing a Letter of Intent Form, Preliminary Specifications for Services, and Guidance on Delivery of Services. To determine level of interest from organizations intending to submit a bid proposal for the Request For Proposal (RFP) process, interested bidders must complete and submit the attached Letter of Intent Form provided by the HCWDB to participate in the RFP Process to provide WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services.

Deadline for Receipt of Intent to Bid Form: Letter of Intent Form (attached) must be received by 12:00 noon EDT, Wednesday, February 12, 2014 by mail or email, to be eligible to participate in the RFP process. Late submissions will not be accepted. The completed form(s) are to be submitted to the High Country Council of Governments (COG), the administrative entity for the Board's Workforce Programs to the following:

Misty Bishop-Price
Workforce Development Department
High Country Council of Governments
468 New Market Boulevard
Boone, NC 28607
828 265-5434 ext. 119
misty.bishopprice@highcountrywdb.com

Date the Proposed Solicitation Will be Issued: Based on Letter of Intent response, **Requests for Proposals will be available March 3rd, 2014. Completed proposals will be due by 4:00 pm, EDT, Monday, March 24, 2014.** It is anticipated that successful bids will be announced Thursday, April 10, 2014 at the HCWDB meeting with contract negotiations between successful bidders and the HCWDB staff to be completed prior to July 1, 2014.

Qualifying Conditions: Any qualifying organization must be in good standing for receipt of state or federal funds, must adhere to all Equal Opportunity Requirements, drug free workplace requirements, and be able to certify that no lobbying will take place while providing WIA-funded services. In addition, for a proposal to be considered, each service provider must be able to provide the following information:

1. List of current board members of governing body;
2. Current fiscal statement and copy of last audit;
3. Organization's grievance procedure;
4. Organization's bonding agreement;
5. Organization's personnel and travel policies (to include disciplinary policies);
6. Charter and bylaws of organization;
7. Evidence of signatory authority;
8. Banking arrangements; and
9. Cost allocation plan (indirect costs not expected to be applicable).

Interested organizations should have a history of delivering successful workforce services and/or strong evidence that the organization is fully capable of implementing all required expectations and oversight of WIA and Integrated Service Delivery.

Type of Services to be Offered: Services to be provided to WIA eligible and suitable individuals at a minimum, include the following: outreach; initial and comprehensive assessments; eligibility determination; enrollment; documentation; career counseling; skill development through an appropriate mix of workshops, classroom training, on-the-job training, subsidized work experience, and other services as appropriate; referral for additional services; support services; and post program/employment follow-up services.

Applicable Federal and State laws and regulations apply to include the [Workforce Investment Act and Final WIA Regulations](#), (USDOL WIA Regulations, 20 CFR Part 652 and Parts 660 through 671), and all appropriate policy issuances from the [NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions](#), and the [HCWDB](#).

Specific Target Groups to be Served: Eligible and suitable adults, dislocated workers, and youth as defined in the WIA regulations. The HCWDB is seeking a single organization that will provide WIA services to all three target groups in Watauga County.

Geographic Area to be Served: This Letter of Intent covers workforce services for Watauga County located in northwest North Carolina. It is expected that WIA services are to be delivered within the local Workforce Center in Boone, NC.

Expected Performance: WIA Common Performance Measures are applicable. Local driven measures may also be established by the HCWDB. Staff will be expected to actively participate in Integrated Service Delivery for the workforce center's customer base along with local Division of Workforce Solutions staff and potentially other partner staff. High quality customer services are an expectation.

Expected Period of Performance: For successful bidders to the Request for Proposals (which follows the Letter of Intent submission), the contract period will begin July 1, 2014 and continue through June 30, 2015. Therefore, selected bidders must be in a position to begin providing WIA services no later than July 1, 2014. Barring unsatisfactory performance or management issues and pending successful re-

negotiation of contract(s) it is anticipated that successful bidder(s) will have the option of annual contract renewal through June 30, 2017 (up to three years).

Type of Contract to be Awarded: The HCWDB is currently in transition with aspects of financial management. It is anticipated that participant expenses will be paid directly from High Country COG while the contractor will be reimbursed for the cost of staffing on a monthly basis. It is anticipated that daily participant expenses will be managed through the COG's internal financial management system.

Available Funding: It is anticipated that total WIA funding to be available by contract for Watauga County is \$108,000, with \$54,000 designated for staffing the provision of youth services and \$54,000 designated for staffing the provision of adult/dislocated worker services. Based on anticipated levels of funding, it is suggested that proposing organizations would include customer service staffing of 1.5 to 2 full time positions. If the proposed staffing includes part time staff in the proposal, it is expected that part time staff will work at least half time (20 hours per week). The funding above is expected to include staff salaries, fringe benefits, staff travel and training, and office supplies. The HCWDB will be responsible for payment of any facility costs (when applicable) and payment of direct customer expenses to include training expenses, supportive services, paid work experiences, and paid on-the-job training activities.

At this time, we project that funding for direct customer expenses will include at least \$50,000 for adult and dislocated worker customers and at least \$40,000 for youth customers. While all these numbers are to be used for planning for service delivery, final customer numbers and funding amounts are subject to change based upon actual allocation amounts.

Delivery of Services

Integrated Service Delivery

Contractors providing WIA services in the High Country will participate within all functions of Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) and use NCWorks as a client management tool. Goals of ISD include the following:

1. An integrated customer pool where all customers are co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and eligible WIA programs;
2. An integrated customer flow with a defined service delivery process by teams; and
3. Integrated staffing to provide services by function, not by funding stream.

Selected contractors will also assist in the development and delivery of product box services to customers. All services allow the customer an opportunity to know their skills, improve their skills, and get the best job with their skills.

At a minimum, each customer that enters the center will be dually enrolled and have a complete profile in [NCWorks Online](#) to include registration and resume development.

Successful bidders will collaborate with partner agencies and educational institutions to address identified needs of customers to move them into successful educational completion and employment.

Adults and Dislocated Workers

WIA specifies that customers must be at least 18 years of age and be determined eligible to receive WIA funded services and must be in need of WIA assistance. The target group includes unemployed adults, underemployed adults (earning less than the Board's established self sufficiency level), and displaced workers meeting the eligibility requirements for services as a dislocated worker. Priority is given to veterans, low-income individuals, and those receiving public assistance.

WIA specifies that three levels of services be made available to adult and dislocated worker customers of the workforce system through one-stop career centers: core, intensive, and training services.

While WIA service providers often focus on the provision of intensive and training services, they must also have the ability to provide any level of WIA services and/or refer customers to services of other organizations depending on each customer's needs and the available resources. Historically, services have been structured with a primary emphasis on training along with training-related activities within the parameters of the WIA legislation. Currently across the state, discussion is being held on the importance

that shorter term skill development may be more appropriate for customers than long term training programs. In the coming year this will be a consideration in service provision. In most instances, support services will be managed through a referral process rather than with the use of WIA resources. It is expected that service provider staff provide individual case management for customers participating in WIA-funded services using all available tools, resources, and technology. This process allows further streamlining of services while giving close attention to the workforce intermediary role, all resulting in service to additional customers with declining financial resources.

It is anticipated that approximately 40 to 60 adults/dislocated workers will be served in intensive/training services, including carry-over participants. Funding allocated for direct staffing for adults/dislocated workers is anticipated to be \$54,000 for the program year.

NC currently uses WIA Common Measures to calculate performance. Most recent performance measures goals received are for program year 2012 and are as follows:

Performance Measure	WIA Adults	WIA Dislocated Workers
Entered Employment Rate	67.5%	82.0%
Retention Rate	88.4%	89.4%
Average Earnings	\$11,371.50	\$12,491.70

It is anticipated that performance goals for program year 2014 will be similar.

Youth Services

In the High Country Workforce Area, eligible low-income youth enrolled in WIA must be 16-21 years of age, with a focus of out-of-school youth as defined by WIA, and have at least one barrier as defined by WIA.

WIA specifies that ten (10) program elements be made available to youth customers of the workforce system (664.410). These elements include the following: (1) tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies; (2) alternative secondary school offerings; (3) summer employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning; (4) paid and unpaid work experiences, including internship and job shadowing; (5) occupational skill training; (6) leadership development opportunities, which include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors; (7) supportive services; (8) adult mentoring for a duration of at least twelve (12) months; (9) follow-up services; and (10) comprehensive guidance and counseling.

While WIA service providers typically focus on the provision of guidance, counseling, and training services they must have the ability to provide any level of WIA services and/or refer customers to services of other organizations depending on each customer's needs and the available resources. Youth participants often have the need for WIA

supportive services such as travel and childcare in order to successfully complete their education.

In the High Country, the HCWDB is currently working closely with local education systems (secondary and post-secondary) to address needs and barriers for youth. Providers are expected to fully participate and partner in this process. Activities may include staff time within the school system; assisting with special projects; referrals; serving on committees; etc.

The WIA service provider will be responsible for planning and implementing activities and services designed with a youth/young adult population in mind that are appealing and promote progress and completion of youth goals.

In the event that additional funding is made available to operate a stand-alone summer employment program or other special activities, the WIA service provider will be responsible to implement and perform a successful program based on additional funding received.

Currently in the High Country area, WIA youth services are identified as *Get REAL* (Resources, Employment, Advancement, and Learning) Youth Services. Selected providers will use this name and associated logos until further rebranding steps are completed.

It is anticipated that approximately 30 to 40 youth will be served, including carry-over participants. Funding allocated for directly staffing the WIA youth services is anticipated to be \$54,000 for the program year.

NC currently uses WIA Common Measures to calculate performance. Most recent performance measures received are for program year 2012 and are as follows:

Youth Performance Measures	WIA Youth Goal
Placement in Employment or Education	46.70%
Attainment of a Degree or Certificate	37.90%
Numeracy/Literacy	33.20%

It is anticipated that performance goals for program year 2014 will be similar.

Process Improvements

There are several areas in which the HCWDB will be adjusting current processes and procedures. In some cases these adjustments will be substantial process changes to

past methods of serving customers. Successful bidders will be expected to comply with these improvements and initiatives.

Increasing the use of data and technology is a system-wide goal. In all areas, the HCWDB will move towards systems and procedures that increase access to and use of data, including financial management, participant tracking, demand occupations, industry trends, strategic initiatives, and communications. Specific examples of improvements in technology include a streamlined financial management system; an integrated customer resource management system; and a comprehensive state of the art job search, resume building, and labor force tracking technology (NCWorks). All of these improvements will allow employees to spend more time with customers and less time managing paperwork.

Standardization of workforce centers is underway and continues to be a region-wide goal. It is anticipated that centers will be thought of as a retail business that provides a high level of customer service in an inviting and positive environment. Centers are one of the main focuses of WIA public outreach and as such the HCWDB has an interest in developing and maintaining a standardized level of career centers throughout the seven (7) county region to include their locations, logos, outreach, customer interaction, online presence, and work-flows. By standardizing the look and branding, the Center will communicate a strong brand appeal to customers and businesses. Across NC, workforce development boards are engaged in a process of developing a new One-Stop brand. The High Country area will participate in this process and adopt the recommended branding, logos, and other materials.

It is expected that HCWDB service providers will seek to maximize resource use by targeting training funds and services toward industries that are determined to be growing or in-demand and that can lead to self-sufficiency. As the economy continues to transition and new industries emerge as older industries fade, providers are expected to be aware of trends and local conditions.

Highly-trained and customer-orientated staff are critical to the success of workforce services. Staff training and development is critical and will continue to be emphasized to ensure that staff are knowledgeable and can provide the best possible service.

High Country Workforce Development Board

Letter of Intent Form Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Services for Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015)

Through the completion of this form, our organization, is acknowledging an interest to participate in HCWDB's Request for Proposal bid process to provide services as identified in the Workforce Investment Act.

Currently in the High Country service area, the HCWDB is seeking a single qualified organization to provide the full range of Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services for Watauga County, North Carolina.

It is anticipated that the amount to be made available for staffing the adults/dislocated worker services to be approximately \$54,000, and the amount to be made available for staffing the youth services to be approximately \$54,000. These projected amounts are expected to cover staff salaries, fringe benefits, and travel to attend training and the annual state workforce development conference. Final negotiation of contract amounts and service levels will take place upon completion of the service provider selection process and confirmation of program year allocations..

Our organization acknowledges that by submitting this Letter of Intent, we are expressing an interest in participating in the Request for Proposal process to provide WIA services in Watauga County.

Submitting this Letter of Intent in no way guarantees that our organization will be selected to provide WIA services in Watauga County.

Authorized representatives of our organization have received and read the included Preliminary Service Specifications and High Country Workforce Board: Guidance on Delivery of Services prepared on behalf of the HCWDB regarding the provision of WIA services, and we believe our organization is qualified to bid upon these services. We understand that receipt of this completed form by **12:00 noon February 12th, 2014** is a prerequisite for our organization's participation in the HCWDB's Request for Proposal process.

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/email: _____

Signatory Authority Name/Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____