



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

NCWorks Career Center Operations  
Adult, Dislocated Workers, & Business Services  
Youth Services  
PY 2023



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**High Country Workforce Development Board**  
468 New Market Blvd, Boone, NC 28607 (828) 265-5434  
*Equal Opportunity Employer and provider of employment and training programs.*

Misty Bishop-Price, Workforce Director  
[mbishopprice@highcountrywdb.com](mailto:mbishopprice@highcountrywdb.com)

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

This RFP seeks proposals from experienced organizations interested in providing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services to include NCWorks Career Center operations, and services to adults, dislocated workers, businesses, and youth within the seven-county region (Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey) served by the High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB). The provision of these services is to be funded by WIOA, Title I, Public Law 113-128, which began July 1, 2015.

The successful bidder(s) will be selected based on demonstrated abilities, past performance, a sound proposal, collaboration and partnerships, and cost-effective service delivery. It is important to note that the highest scorer is not necessarily entitled to a contract.

The following program components are available for bid:

1. NCWorks Career Center Operator
2. Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Business Services
3. Youth Services

Proposals may include a stand-alone response to #1 if an organization is solely interested in serving as the Operator.

Program components #2 and #3 at a minimum must be proposed together.

Proposals must be designed to serve multiple counties or the full region. The service delivery area is located in the northwestern mountains of North Carolina spanning over 2,500 square miles from end to end with Watauga County being located approximately in the center. The HCWDB encourages bidders to consider bidding either on the entire region or multiple counties that already have strong regional partnerships in place.

Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties are located to the south of Watauga County and are served by a single community college - Mayland Community College. The northern three counties: Alleghany, Ashe, and Wilkes are served by a single community college - Wilkes Community College. Watauga is central to the region and is served by Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute. Single county proposals will not be considered. Proposals must demonstrate the organization's ability to administer a consistent regional strategy including coordination with key partners that support regional efforts and goals.

*Disclaimer: This RFP, any bids submitted by proposers to this request, and any final contracts negotiated with the successful bidder(s) as a result of this proposal is subject to final laws and regulations issued by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions (NCDOC-DWS) and may be changed at any time in order to come into compliance with those laws and regulations. Bidders are strongly encouraged to follow the USDOL's WIOA resource page for latest updates: [www.doleta.gov/wioa/](http://www.doleta.gov/wioa/). Furthermore, as the HCWDB continues to develop and*

*refine its NCWorks system and integrate WIOA regulations, its policies and procedures are likely to change. Bidding organizations may be requested to modify program design or the delivery of services. Should a request for a change in the program design or service occur, HCWDB staff will assist bidding organizations or service providers in the redesign to ensure consistency with policy and regulatory requirements. Any significant changes made to this RFP will be posted to the [www.highcountrywdb.com](http://www.highcountrywdb.com) website.*

### **Proposal Due Date**

All proposals must be submitted no later than 5:00 PM, Monday, February 6th, 2023 as an emailed PDF to the designated staff:

High Country WDB  
Attention: Misty Bishop-Price, Director  
[misty.bishopprice@highcountrywdb.com](mailto:misty.bishopprice@highcountrywdb.com)  
(828) 265-5434, ext. 119

Budget worksheets and other attachments may be submitted separately in other formats, as specified.

### **Type of Contract**

Respondents must propose a cost reimbursement contract. A cost reimbursement contract is one that establishes an estimate of total costs for the purpose of obligating funds and a ceiling that the service provider may not exceed (except at service provider's risk) unless the awarding party agrees to amend the contract to provide additional funds. A line-item budget shall be based on all legitimate costs to be incurred by the service provider in carrying out the services. The service provider is reimbursed for actual expenses according to the approved line-item budget. For profit organizations may propose a reasonable level of profit, not to exceed 8%, that may be awarded based upon achievement of predetermined parameters/benchmarks of performance with specific timelines for both one stop operations and WIOA service delivery. The contract negotiation process will address this in detail.

### **Contract Terms**

The initial contract term begins July 1, 2023 and ends June 30, 2024. At the end of June 30, 2024, the HCWDB may approve a one-year extension, for up to a total of three (3) years pending funding availability and service provider performance.

## **Tentative Schedule of Events**

RFP Release Date	January 5, 2023
Bidder's Conference via Zoom	January 13, 2023 @ 10:00 AM (Optional)
Proposal Deadline	February 6, 2023, by 5:00 PM
Formal Review of Proposals	February 7, – March 8, 2023
HCWDB Notice of Selection	March 9, 2023
Contract Negotiations	May - June 2023
Anticipated Contract Start Date	July 1, 2023

*\*These dates and times are subject to change.*

Organizations wishing to participate in the Bidder's Conference may participate via Zoom by using the following (**you must be registered to participate**):

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82324266523?pwd=L2J3ZzJqN2NLVm50Y1FzMlFNRRWZQZz09>

Meeting ID: 823 2426 6523

Passcode: 753748

## **RFP Contact**

For questions about the proposal process or technical issues contact the designated staff:

High Country WDB

Attention: Misty Bishop-Price, Director

468 New Market Blvd

Boone, NC 28607

[misty.bishopprice@highcountrywdb.com](mailto:misty.bishopprice@highcountrywdb.com)

(828)265-5434, ext. 119

All questions and corresponding responses will be compiled and posted online.

## **Addenda to this Request for Proposal**

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum will also be posted on the HCWDB website at [www.highcountrywdb.com](http://www.highcountrywdb.com). Respondents are responsible for checking the website frequently to remain informed about the procurement process and other information that may affect this RFP (e.g. WIOA information, changes to performance measures, and revisions to the timeline).

## **Right to Cancel**

The HCWDB reserves the right to cancel all or any part of this RFP at any time without prior notice and reserves the right to modify the RFP process and timeline as is deemed necessary.

## Estimated WIOA Regional Funding Availability for PY 2023

*Adult	\$310,000.00
*Dislocated Worker	\$220,000.00
*Youth	\$400,000.00
**American Rescue Plan Act: Substance Use Recovery	\$75,000.00
**American Rescue Plan Act: Work-based Learning	\$225,000.00
Total PY 2023 Estimated Funding	\$1,230,000.00

### Regional Center Operations

Adult	\$15,000.00
Dislocated Worker	\$10,000.00
Youth	\$15,000.00
Total Allocation for Center Operations	\$40,000.00

\*All amounts are estimates for planning purposes and are subject to change upon receiving regional allocations. At least twenty percent (20%) of youth funds must be dedicated to work-based learning. Maximum amounts for staff salaries (if any) are outlined in the budget summary worksheet for that specific fund.

While not currently in place, additional Dislocated Worker/Contingency Funds may be requested if deemed necessary and are contingent upon DWS approval after the program year starts.

\*\*American Rescue Plan Act Funds awarded (January 2023) focus on two workforce development areas to assist individuals with substance use disorder/recovery and to expand work-based learning opportunities to assist small businesses that have 25 or fewer employees. Above amounts reflect a portion of the full grant, designed for two years.

NOTE: Throughout the year, the HCWDB will attempt to secure additional funding to support program operations as it is made available.

## **BACKGROUND**

### Overview of the High Country Workforce Development Board

The mission of the HCWDB and its workforce system is to help employers meet their workforce needs, help individuals build careers, strengthen the local economy, and meet the challenges of global competition.

The HCWDB is a private sector-led board that provides policies, guidance, and oversight for WIOA programs in a seven-county region (Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey) along the Blue Ridge Mountains in northwest North Carolina. The HCWDB is led by a Consortium of Chief Local Elected Officials and a board that oversees a broad range of programs and initiatives. The HCWDB includes representatives from small, medium, and large businesses; labor organizations; education; economic development; community-based organizations; and one-stop partners. Additional information can be found at [www.highcountrywdb.com](http://www.highcountrywdb.com).

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The HCWDB is responsible for guiding and overseeing the workforce development system across the High Country region with a goal of serving the needs of employers and jobseekers. The HCWDB also has the responsibility to manage and oversee the administration and implementation of WIOA programs and services as well as conduct planning, oversight, and evaluation of the local One-Stop Career Center system.

The High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) is the grant recipient/fiscal agent and administrative entity for the WIOA Title I (B) funds as designated by the High Country Workforce Development Consortium. Contracts entered into with WIOA service providers in the Local Area will be contracts with the HCCOG. All parties contracting with HCCOG must comply with USDOL regulations and its published interpretations. Administration and operation of this program is subject to compliance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, state of North Carolina policies and procedures as issued from the NCDOL-DWS, and local policies and procedures issued by the HCWDB. Funded proposals will be required to meet specific federal, state and local guidelines for participant outcomes and program performance.

Responsibilities of the board and its designated staff include the following:

### **Federal Connection**

- Ensure that federal policies, procedures, and guidelines are correctly implemented;
- Allocate federal workforce development funds within the NCWorks System;
- Provide data and reports as needed to satisfy federal systems; and
- Participate in federal funding opportunities that further the board's vision for the NCWorks System.

## **State Connection**

- Ensure that state policies, procedures, and guidelines are correctly implemented;
- Allocate state workforce development funds;
- Provide data and reports as needed to satisfy state systems; and
- Participate in state funding opportunities that further the board's vision for the NCWorks System.

## **Local Connection**

- Comply with local government policies (the WDB fiscal agent) and regulations;
- Provide oversight/guidance for NCWorks Career Centers;
- Serve as the convener for workforce development in the seven-county area; and
- Partner with local organizations on community needs.

## **Evaluation**

- Development and use of standard policies and procedures throughout the region;
- Certification of the NCWorks Career Centers;
- Meet with NCWorks Operator and service providers regularly to listen to suggestions, discuss issues, and resolve concerns; and
- Monitor and report on quality, performance, and cost effectiveness through on-site visits, records review, evaluations, expenditure review, and other methods as needed.

## **Outreach**

- Approve site location, facilities, and equipment that contribute to a quality center and customer satisfaction;
- Develop or approve outreach materials funded by the board or containing information about the board's programs;
- Provide NCWorks Operator and service provider a common name, logo, and signage to promote the identity of the NCWorks System; and
- Ensure connectivity between the NCWorks Operator and local and regional entities such as service providers, chambers of commerce, public educational institutions, economic development entities, etc.

## **Performance/Compliance**

- Provide technical assistance on all policies, procedures, and rules that impact the operation of centers giving assistance as needed for compliance;
- Develop and provide technical assistance to build capacity to help operator meet quality and consistency standards as well as to meet or exceed performance goals within the NCWorks system;
- Ensure compliance with all rules, regulations, and procedures issued by all funding sources which may be refined and changed:
- Perform fiscal and programmatic monitoring for compliance in accordance with federal, state, and local standards;
- Track the outcome of each performance measure; and
- Approve regional education/training providers for inclusion on the North Carolina Training Provider List

## **Fiscal**

- Ensure that administrative and programmatic cost categories are properly implemented;
- Confirm that costs are correctly allocated to the associated funding stream;
- Verify that NCWorks System costs are allocated according to the Memorandums of Understanding and Infrastructure Agreements; and
- Provide technical assistance to the fiscal staff of the NCWorks Career Center Operator and service provider.

## **Current High Country NCWorks Career Center System**

Currently, there are seven NCWorks Career Centers throughout the region with a wide variety of involved partners, operational methods, types of location, and traffic flow. The HCWDB, our sub-recipients, and network of partners continue to evaluate and adapt these career centers in each county. For additional details about current NCWorks Career Centers in the High Country area, including costs associated in the operation of the centers, see the HCWDB Career Center Analysis.

It is expected that career centers meet standard expectations set forth for center certification when possible. High Country recently completed the certification process as established by the NCWorks Commission. Centers in Ashe, Watauga, and Wilkes counties have met certification requirements as Tier 1, full-service centers as of October 2022, expiring October 2024. Centers located in Alleghany, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties are deemed as affiliate locations.



*Note: To avoid possible confusion over language, at the national level, the former One-Stop public employment and training system is now being referred to as the American Job Centers (AJC). North Carolina's AJCs are called NCWorks Career Centers upon certification by the state. Any references in this document to career centers, workforce centers, or one-stop centers are references to our local NCWorks Career Centers. Local NCWorks Career Center's must show the partnership with AJC's through at a minimum incorporating the AJC logo.*

Current High Country Labor Market information for the High Country area can be found in the [Labor Market section](#) of the HCWDB website and at the [NC Labor & Economic Analysis Division](#) site.

## **Additional Guidance**

WIOA, policy, procedures, and guidance continue to be revised and developed at the federal, state, and local levels. Bidders for this RFP must be willing to creatively and quickly invent and implement new practices and processes, then evaluate and modify them as needed to best serve customers and to comply with new regulations and/or changes to available funds.

Bidders should be cognizant of pending workforce system changes due to the passage/reauthorization of WIOA legislation. Several sources provide guidance on employment and training system changes, policy, and training. Sources include the following:

- [\*\*WIOA Information\*\*](#)
- [\*\*What Works in Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Training and Employment \(TEN\) 5-14\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 3-14\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 19-14\*\*](#)
- [\*\*NC Division of Workforce Development\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The Innovation and Opportunity Network\*\*](#)
- [\*\*National Youth Employment Coalition\*\*](#)
- [\*\*NCWorks Training Center\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Workforce GPS\*\*](#)

Newly selected service providers will be expected to continue services with currently enrolled customers. The WDB encourages any newly selected service providers to consider current WIOA staff as potential employees.

**Active WIOA Enrolled Customers by NCWorks Center on 1-1-2023\***

NCWorks Center	Adults	Dislocated Workers	In-School Youth	Out-of-School Youth	Totals
Alleghany	1	1	0	0	2
Ashe	4	3	0	1	8
Avery	5	3	0	2	10
Mitchell	9	4	2	8	23
Watauga	13	14	1	6	34
Wilkes	40	16	0	4	60
Yancey	21	12	4	21	58
Totals	93	53	7	42	195

**Total Served Year to Date by Center July 1, 2022 - January 1, 2023\***

NCWorks Center	Adults	Dislocated Workers	In-School Youth	Out-of-School Youth	Totals
Alleghany	1	1	0	1	3
Ashe	4	3	0	2	9
Avery	8	3	0	3	14
Mitchell	13	5	2	13	33
Watauga	17	14	1	6	38
Wilkes	62	17	0	9	88
Yancey	30	14	4	27	75
Totals	135	57	7	61	260

*\*Numbers include dual-enrolled customers. Numbers are from NCWorks Online reports.*

Please note that while enrollment numbers have been negatively impacted by COVID over the past couple of years, it is expected that enrollments/services will increase, and caseloads should remain consistent.

## Career Pathways

Under WIOA the HCWDB, in coordination with service providers and partners, will continue to lead/support efforts in the area to develop and implement career pathways by aligning the employment, training, education and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth to gain employment. While the focus has somewhat changed over the past several years, initiatives will continue to be developed to identify employment needs of employers within identified sectors and occupations. Efforts will include enhancing communication, coordination, and collaboration among employers, educational partners, economic development entities, and service providers to develop and implement strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers.

WIOA Sec. 3 (7) describes Career Pathway – The term “career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that:

- a. Aligns with skill needs of industries in the economy of the state or regional economy involved;
- b. Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, Chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 60 ET SEQ.) (Referred to individually in this act as an “apprenticeship”, except in Section 171);
- c. Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
- d. Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- e. Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practical;
- f. Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least one recognized postsecondary credential; and
- g. Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

It is expected to receive updated guidelines/processes for supporting Career Pathways. Once received High Country WDB will work with staff to implement requirements and meet goals.

## **Mandated Partners**

Under WIOA, required NCWorks delivery system partners include the following (Section 121 (b)(1):

- WIOA Title I programs (Core partner)
- Wagner-Peyser programs (Core partner)
- Adult Education and Literacy programs (Core partner)
- Rehabilitation Act programs (Core partner)
- Older Americans Act programs
- Perkins postsecondary vocational education activities
- Trade Adjustment Assistance and NAFTA-TAA programs
- Veterans Employment and Training
- Community Service Block Grant employment and training activities
- HUD employment and training activities
- Unemployment compensation programs
- Second Chance Act Programs
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless opted out by the Governor)

*Note: Core programs will have to measure effectiveness in serving employers and will report on common performance indicators which includes how many job seekers entered and retained employment, their median wages, whether they attained credentials, and their measurable skill gains.*

## **Additional Partners – with approval of local board and Chief Local Elected Official:**

- Employment and training programs administered by the SSA
- Employment and training programs administered by the Small Business Administration
- SNAP and SNAP E&T programs
- Client assistance programs
- National and Community Service state grants
- Other appropriate federal, state or local employment, education and training programs

Proposers to this RFP will need to adhere to the general expectation that the outreach and recruitment functions associated with delivery of any activities being proposed will need to be coordinated with mandatory partners as outlined in WIOA.

## **NCWorks Commission**

The NCWorks Commission recommends policies and strategies that enable the state's workforce and businesses to compete in the global economy. The Commission is designated as the state's Workforce Development Board under the federal [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#). Led by a private sector chair, the 33-member Commission includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders. All members are appointed by the Governor.

The NCWorks Commission has adopted the state's [2021-2023 Strategic Plan](#) that sets the direction and priorities for North Carolina's workforce development system with four key goals. WIOA program service delivery will need to align with the goals of the strategic plan as well.

## **NC Job Ready**

The Commission is committed to supporting Governor Roy Cooper's [NC Job Ready Initiative](#) and his priorities for workforce development, desiring North Carolinians to be better educated, healthier, and have more money in their pockets so that they can live more abundant, purposeful lives. NC Job Ready is built on three core principles: skills and education attainment so North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow; employer leadership to remain relevant to evolving industry needs; and local innovation to take great ideas and apply them statewide.

Education is the foundation to a strong workforce, and so the Commission also supports Governor Cooper's goal to make North Carolina a Top Ten Educated State by 2025 by increasing the number of four-year-olds enrolled in high quality pre-K, raising the high school graduation rate, and increasing the number of North Carolinians with a post-secondary degree or credential. Key components include skills and education attainment; employer leadership; and local innovation.

## **myFutureNC**

The High Country WDB, through an approved resolution, supports the [myFutureNC](#) initiative geared towards the goal of increasing the educational attainment rates of its citizens. As stated in its report, *"Job seekers struggle to find jobs, and employers struggle to find the talent they need to fill openings. If we stay on the trajectory projected in 2019 of increased degrees and credentials, by 2030, North Carolina will still fall short by at least 400,000 individuals with the skills needed to fill our state's projected jobs' needs."*

Selected Operators and Service Providers should be familiar with this initiative and consider how service delivery supports NC's goals. Four focus areas have been identified to guide the state's work to include the following:

1. Education and Workforce Alignment
2. Access to Lifelong Educational Opportunities
3. Preparation for Education, Career, and Life
4. Comprehensive Support Systems

In addition, local goals have been established and progress is being tracked through [county attainment profiles](#). Selected providers should consider ways to support and assist this initiative.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

For purposes of this RFP the scope of work can be broken into three categories:

1. NCWorks Career Center Operations
2. Adult/Dislocated Worker and Business Services
3. Youth Services

### **The NCWorks System**

The HCWDB is seeking service providers that employ vision, innovation, accountability, and efficient and effective utilization of resources in workforce development programming with customers. In the interest of establishing a seamless delivery of services for all prospective customers and keeping with both the spirit of the WIOA legislation as it pertains to the participation of all mandatory partner agencies and programs, it is essential that all partners operate in the most effective and integrated manner as possible. However, it is not necessary that all partner services are located at all NCWorks Centers.

Contracting organizations will be expected to deliver WIOA services within the context of the NCWorks system and specifically in the local NCWorks Career Centers, which includes consistent use of name, logo, marketing materials, etc. Career centers serve as a hub for workforce efforts within their community, offering services to both job seekers and employers within the NCWorks Integrated Services Framework. Each individual county career center operates in a variety of ways: each having a unique set of partner agency staffing, lease and utility arrangements, and ongoing improvement activities.

WIOA-funded staff will work within an integrated NCWorks team to coordinate and assist in the delivery of all aspects of career services including greeting customers, intensive career advising, scholarships for training, workshop organization, hiring events, and other center services including WIOA-funded business services and WIOA-funded youth services. All staff should be fully cross-trained to fulfill any “career services” role within a center dependent on need and traffic flow. Things to consider when scheduling center coverage should be one’s mandated program requirements and caseloads of Career Advisors.

Service providers are expected to assist in workforce system building activities with NCWorks partners, the education community, and other organizations. Activities should include, but are not limited to, partnerships with schools to provide workforce information and resources, assisting with career fairs, hosting workshops, supporting Career Pathways, and the NCWorks system. Proposals should incorporate activities that demonstrate the provider’s ability to successfully engage and contribute to the development of the local workforce system.

## NCWorks Career Center Operations

WIOA and [Commission Policy Statement 04-2022](#) requires workforce boards to procure the operator of one-stop centers. The primary role of the NCWorks System Operator (otherwise known as the Operator) is to ensure that services provided through the centers meet the needs of customers (business and job seeker) in an efficient and effective manner. It is critical that one-stop operations are unified with the delivery of WIOA services, including WIOA-mandated and non-mandated partner organizations, to all interested job seekers and businesses in all career centers. In addition, the Operator provides management and oversight of the partnership of agencies that comprises the NCWorks Career Center system.

The primary goal of the Operator is to create a seamless system of partners among workforce development, economic development, business, and community agencies in order to meet the needs of businesses and job seekers in the High Country region. The Operator will work closely with the HCWDB staff to effectively implement an integrated NCWorks system for businesses and job seekers.

Bidders may choose to propose arrangements as the sole organization operating career centers or as a consortium made up of at least three partners (as described in WIOA Sec 121) to ensure the following:

- The Operator shall ensure that NCWorks Career Centers deliver quality and timely career services on a daily basis;
- The Operator shall ensure that NCWorks Career Centers provide information and access to training services;
- The Operator shall ensure that NCWorks Career Centers provide information and access to programs and activities carried out by NCWorks partners;
- The Operator shall provide coordination and access to the labor market data, information, and analysis and all job search, placement, recruitment, and other labor exchange services authorized by Wagner-Peyser which are mandated to co-locate within the NCWorks Career Centers;
- The Operator shall ensure that all center services and outreach materials are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Equal Opportunity (EO) guidelines;
- The Operator will assist with streamlining standard operating procedures to include referrals, follow-up with customers, and reporting; and
- The Operator will assist in the development and coordination of follow-up services to customers keeping in mind WIOA performance measures for all programs.



It is expected that the successful proposer will work in close partnership with the HCWDB staff to provide guidance and leadership to the NCWorks system to achieve the following outcomes:

- Deliver a high-quality, consistent set of services to job seekers and business customers;
- Ensure a mix of services that allow the system to serve a diverse customer base and underserved populations;
- Coordinate services and funding to support customer access to and success in postsecondary education;
- Support job seekers and workers to progress toward economic self-sufficiency;
- Promote business- and industry-sector and employer-driven skilled development strategies;
- Maintain and consistently improve the integration of services and service providers within NCWorks;
- Ensure high levels of accountability, cost-efficiency, and innovation to maximize resources and customer satisfaction; and
- Service delivery that assists in meeting WIOA performance goals for the region.

The Operator reports to the WDB Director/Executive staff and is responsible for implementing and managing the NCWorks system under policies and guidelines established by the HCWDB; the NCWorks Commission; the NCDOC-DWS, and the federal government. Under this component, the Operator is responsible for coordinating with the HCWDB to ensure system-wide standards are achieved and utilize continuous quality improvement assessment tools to document positive change and to systemize standards and their usage across the system.

The Operator is responsible for promoting and facilitating integration of service delivery in the HCWDB NCWorks system. Examples of services to be provided under this work component may include the following:

- Coordination and improvement of career services;
- Developing strategies to increase service delivery to job seekers and employers;
- Expanding and developing partnerships that assist in serving customers;
- Coordinating with local rapid response teams and activities;
- Assisting in the marketing and outreach of the NCWorks Career Centers;
- Coordinating communication between functional teams and offices;
- Coordination of resource room, staffing schedules, and regular staff meetings;
- Monitoring and addressing customer service needs;
- Coordinating staff competency training; and
- Coordinating and integrating business services among partners.

Duties and expectations of career center operations are also detailed in the [High Country NCWorks Career Center System Memorandum of Agreement](#). It is important that service providers and operators familiarize themselves with this document.

## **Clarifying Partner Expectations**

Centers should work closely with partners to create strategies to more effectively serve all customers. Some centers already have regularly scheduled partner meetings. It will be expected that the selected service providers and center operator will participate in these meetings.

The NCWorks Operator selected through this procurement will coordinate the NCWorks services offered by the required and additional NCWorks partners according to the requirements of WIOA.

The High Country WDB expects the competitively selected one stop operator(s) to be responsible for effective and efficient operation of our local NCWorks Centers. It is further expected that the selected operator(s) will work with career center partners to determine roles and responsibilities for day-to-day operations.

Operators may or may not also be the employer of record for the individual selected as center manager. In some cases, Division of Workforce Solutions managers may provide daily management and leadership of the centers. When there is a need or an instance for the Division of Workforce Solutions manager to provide daily management and leadership functions in the center, this is only permissible with the agreement of the Operator and the High Country Workforce Development Board. It is expected that the Operator will ensure the oversight and management of the career centers, even if there is necessary delegation of day-to-day activities.

Each NCWorks Career Center is expected to hold or participate in partner meetings regularly to encourage communication among partners, leverage resources, discuss effectiveness of the NCWorks Career Center.

The HCWDB Director will negotiate with the state/partners to develop and maintain resource sharing agreements that are required to be in place each year. Each resource sharing agreement will detail the following:

1. Services provided and coordinated through the NCWorks System;
2. Funding of shared services and infrastructure costs; and
3. Referral methods between partners and the NCWorks operator(s).

Partners will make a commitment to support the following:

- A strong coordinated approach designed to serve the customer, simplifying bureaucratic systems;
- Bringing funded or in-kind resources;
- Providing staff to be supervised (functionally) by the managing entity or providing an electronic linkage in lieu of a staff presence;
- Sharing in the cost of NCWorks Career Center Operations (as agreed);
- Sharing in the goals and operation of the NCWorks Career Center;
- Actively participating in the governance of the NCWorks Career Center; and
- Supporting the NCWorks Career Center mission, goals, and business plan.

Additional information regarding the procurement of center operations can be found in [TEGL 15-16](#).

## **Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The HCWDB is committed to continuous improvement and training in the areas of Equal Opportunity (EO) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) which includes its local career centers as well as its service providers. Equal Opportunity training is required annually, and participation is required of all staff. In addition, all staff are expected to participate in DEI activities and trainings.

## **Adult/Dislocated Workers**

In North Carolina and the High Country, the NCWorks system is the basic service delivery system for providing services to adults and dislocated workers. WIOA legislation and NC DWS provides funding, direction, and guidance for serving adult customers, including dislocated workers.

[TEGL 19-16](#) provides guidance on services provided through the adult and dislocated worker programs. [Attachment III of Key Terms and Definitions](#) includes the variety of categories of which individuals qualify as a dislocated worker.

North Carolina DWS has also provided guidance on serving dislocated workers in [Policy Statement 02-2017](#) and includes an additional state category of “long term unemployed” as those who have been unemployed for 13 consecutive weeks or more as eligible as a dislocated worker.

It is expected that selected service providers will make the continuum of services identified in the legislation, and the subsequent regulations, available to adult and dislocated worker customers. Services include career services and training services. Specifics on service delivery can be found in Part 680 of the Rules and Regulations.

The HCWDB is looking for service providers to work as a part of a team in providing innovative and relevant career services to all customers, no matter the skill level or path to educational and employment goals. This requires staff to be actively engaged in working with the public on a regular basis. Staff’s professional expertise and passion for helping customers is what brings customers back to the center.

Section 134(c) (3) (E) of WIOA establishes a priority requirement with respect to funds allocated to a local area for adult funded employment and training activities. Under this section, staff responsible for these funds must give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized services and training services. Priority must be provided regardless of the level of funds.

Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of services for all USDOL funded job training programs, which includes WIOA programs. See [Operational Guidance 19-2021](#).

Services are categorized at three levels to include: basic career services, individualized career services, and training services.

### **Basic Career Services include the following:**

- Eligibility determination for funding and services;
- Outreach, intake, and orientation to the information and other services available through the NCWorks Career Centers;

- Initial assessment of educational attainment and skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs;
- Job search and placement assistance and, in appropriate cases, career counseling, including information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and nontraditional employment;
- Appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers;
- Referrals to and coordination of activities with partner programs and services;
- Workforce and labor market employment statistics information, which includes job vacancy listings; job skills necessary for job openings; and information on local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement within those career pathways;
- Performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training;
- Information, in formats that are usable by and understandable to customers, regarding how the High Country Local Area is performing on the local performance accountability measures;
- Information relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance provided by partners;
- Referrals to supportive services or other needed assistance;
- Information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation;
- Information and assistance regarding financial aid assistance for training and education programs

**Individualized Career Services include:**

- Other services needed in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment, that consist of comprehensive and specialized assessments of the skill levels and service needs of adults and dislocated workers, which may include diagnostic testing and use of other assessment tools and in-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals;
- Development of an individual employment plan to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals, including providing information on eligible providers of training services and career pathways to attain career objectives;
- Group counseling;
- Individual counseling;
- Career planning;

- Short-term pre-vocational services including development of learning skills, communication skills, interviewing skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and professional conduct, to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training;
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers;
- Workforce preparation activities;
- Financial literacy services;
- Out-of-area job search assistance and relocation assistance;
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs; and
- Follow-up services, including counseling regarding the workplace, for participants in WIOA activities authorized under this subtitle that are placed in unsubsidized employment, for not less than 12 months after the first day of the employment, as appropriate.

### **Training Services**

Upon completion of orientation and assessments, customers may be deemed appropriate for training services if the customer is unlikely to obtain or retain self-sufficient employment. Training programs should focus on in-demand industry sectors or occupations in demand in the area, or an area to where the customer is willing to relocate.

Occupational skills training should be provided through individual training accounts from an approved training provider. All customers interested in receiving WIOA scholarship assistance must apply for a Pell Grant, and if awarded, the Pell Grant funds are to be applied to the cost of training prior to use of WIOA funding.

#### **Training services include the following:**

- Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- On-the-Job Training (OJT);
- Incumbent worker training (as policy and local funding allow);
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs and apprenticeship;
- Training programs operated by the private sector;
- Skill upgrading and retraining;
- Entrepreneurial training;
- Transitional jobs; and
- Adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with other training services.

All those who receive training services must be determined eligible for WIOA-funded services and follow the priority of service in WIOA.

Selected service providers will be expected to continue services with currently enrolled participants.

Each customer should receive an orientation of available services, including all partner services and any other pertinent resources to ensure successful return to employment. The orientation shall include a complete overview of the processes and procedures for gaining maximum benefits from engagement with the NCWorks Career Center. Orientations can be conducted in individual or group settings, depending on demand and the need for center efficiency. Any group orientations (or other center activities) may be center or program specific and should be included on the calendar of events for the public through [www.NCWorks.gov](http://www.NCWorks.gov).

WIOA consistently emphasizes the need for services targeted to persons with disabilities and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals who receive public assistance or are otherwise low income and/or basic skills deficient. Outreach, marketing efforts, and services shall include efforts to encourage the use of the NCWorks system to groups that need employment and training services to become more skilled and employable in the path to financial self-sufficiency.

WIOA Sec. 3 (24) defines an “individual with a barrier to employment” means a member of one or more of the following populations:

- a. Displaced Homemakers
- b. Low-Income Individuals
- c. Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, as such terms are defined in Section 166
- d. Individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities
- e. Older individuals
- f. Ex-Offenders
- g. Homeless Individuals (as defined in Section 41403(6) of the Violence against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6), or homeless children and youths (as defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)).
- h. Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system
- i. Individuals who are English language learners and individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
- j. Eligible migrant and seasonal farm workers, as defined in Section 167(i)
- k. Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under Part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- l. Single parents (including single pregnant women)

- m. Long term unemployed individuals
- n. Such other groups as the Governor involved determines to have barriers to employment

## **Program Requirements**

Eligibility Verification/Documentation: Selected service providers are required to use NCWorks for all aspects of documentation and tracking of services. In many cases all NCWorks staff are enrolling customers into WIOA career services. Since WIOA does away with the core, intensive and training sequence, the WIOA service provider will need to ensure that each customer is eligible to receive WIOA-funded services prior to obligating or paying any expenses on a customer's behalf. Service providers are responsible for determining, verifying, and certifying WIOA eligibility for each adult or dislocated worker applicant by obtaining acceptable records/ documents to verify each required eligibility item. Verification documents and other necessary paperwork must be maintained to the greatest extent possible in NCWorks.

Documentation of services, referrals, progress, activities, and follow-up will be entered into NCWorks. Documentation should provide information related to successes and barriers related to the completion of the service plan along with potential next steps of services.

Assessments: WIOA expects center staff to conduct an initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities, (including skill gaps) and supportive service needs. Initial assessment will include the following: basic skills, work readiness skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, barriers to employment, family situation, occupational interests and aptitudes, financial resources and needs, supportive service needs, and developmental needs.

This information should be acquired through various means, including, but not limited to, standardized tests, structured interviews, behavioral observations, inventories, career guidance instruments, performance-based or competency-based assessment tools, and where the information is current and reliable, assessment results from another service provider (school or agency).

Individual Employment Plans: Each customer enrolled into WIOA services will have a signed individualized employment plan (IEP) to identify the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve the employment goals, including providing information on eligible providers of training services, and career pathways to attain career objectives.

Employment plans should be flexible and responsive to the individual needs of each customer as they move through needed career services and/or training services, keeping in mind that employment is the ultimate goal for all our customers. The IEP should be reviewed and updated at least every six months. Each plan will identify educational goals, pre-employment steps, selected learning objectives, training and work-based learning (when provided) and any other preparation for unsubsidized employment. The plan will set clear and realistic goals for educational advancement, entry into employment in a



targeted industry, and any continued learning and development, as needed. Service Plans should be developed and updated in NCWorks.

**Case Management:** All NCWorks Career Centers are expected to make available group counseling, individual counseling, and career planning. While not every customer that is served by the NCWorks Career Center will receive comprehensive case management services, this service may be needed for customers that exhibit multiple barriers and/or have longer term educational goals to obtain employment.

Staff is expected to work closely with customers to provide support and guidance, address needs and barriers, assist with problem solving, serve as role models, and assist in the attainment of the objectives and goals agreed upon in their plan. Regular personal contact between staff and the adult/dislocated customer is important. Based on the case management relationship, the customer should be aware that he/she has support and accountability in working to achieve his/her personal goals.

Primary case management functions may include services coordination, advising, career counseling, advocacy, follow-up as appropriate, and accurate and timely record keeping. Staff are to be informed of and adhere to professional standards of client confidentiality and safeguarding of personal and confidential information.

**Employment and Training Services:** WIOA legislation speaks to priority of services relative to the provision of employment and training services. As referenced in the WIOA legislation “priority shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services, described in paragraph (2) (A) (xii) and training services.”

**Performance Measures:** The High Country WDB negotiated our local performance goals with DWS for PY2023 federal measures. While PY2024 goals have currently not been set, it is expected that the goals will be a slight increase.

## **Business Services**

Serving the needs of business is a principal focus for WIOA and the HCWDB, as business is an important customer with the continuing need of finding and hiring candidates. The HCWDB strives to increase the number of employers served via the NCWorks system. Whereas in the past these services have been delivered by an assortment of agencies with little coordination, the business service delivery system should be highly coordinated to avoid confusion by the business community and improve the quality of every business service. Business service staff shall take a lead role in understanding the needs of businesses and in communicating those needs to the broader workforce system. It is expected that coordination with other partners that provide business services - to include but not limited to - community colleges, DWS, and VR will occur in order to avoid duplication of services and visits as well as confusion within the local business community.

The workforce system should work strategically to align itself with business needs, and career center staff shall also ensure coordination and quality of a suite of fundamental services. All High Country NCWorks Career Centers shall offer a broad range of integrated services that are provided at no cost to all employers to support economic and workforce development efforts. Staff who provide business services should be fully integrated into the customer flow of businesses and job seekers and be aware of regional and statewide trends (see [2022 Employer Needs Survey](#)).

The WIOA service provider will be responsible for coordinating or delivering the following employer services with partner staff:

- Interviewing activities held at the NCWorks Career Center;
- Access to labor market and related information through NCWorks Online System (NCWorks.gov);
- Information and referral regarding workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities;
- Information and referral to business start-up, retention, and expansion services;
- Information and referral to sources for developing customized training programs;
- Information on career preparation activities and career pathways;
- Information on Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) and certification;
- Information, development, and coordination of work-based learning opportunities including Youth Work Experiences, Internships, On-the-Job Training contracts, and apprenticeships.
- Information and development of incumbent worker training;
- State and/or federally generated information on tax credits for new hires;
- State and/or federal program information on federal bonding;
- Access to information and services through the NCWorks Career Center and NCWorks Online;
- Avenues to place job openings as well as access to NCWorks.gov;
- Referrals of well-qualified NCWorks customers;

- Staff-assisted employee pre-screening;
- Basic job matching of résumés and applications;
- Preliminary basic skills and other assessments;
- Industry specific job fairs;
- Positive recruitments;
- Relevant business seminars and information sessions;
- Development and coordination of job orders;
- Coordination of rapid response activities;
- Identification of needs and solutions;
- Coordination with other business-serving organizations;
- Keying of business services in NCWorks system; and
- Other HCWDB approved business services, as applicable.

Certain services may be offered for a fee to businesses. Services that may be offered include the following:

- Employee background checks;
- Applicant pre-interview;
- Screening, drug testing;
- In-depth assessment and testing of potential candidates;
- Locating and procuring sites for the interviewing process;
- Business-specific job fairs; and
- Outreach and marketing services to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The HCWDB must approve all fee-based services. All revenue generated from fee-based services must be handled in accordance with WIOA regulations and the appropriate federal circulars regarding program income. The service provider may not charge for services already funded by WIOA or Wagner Peyser.

### **Business Engagement Protocol**

Selected service providers will be expected to participate on the local business service delivery team. Team members can include customized training, small business center, business and industry services, partners, and WDB staff. Goals of the business engagement protocol include the following:

- Build and maintain lasting relationships using a consultative approach with local business and industry customers;
- Proactively work with businesses, industries, public and private agencies, and individuals to identify training needs and opportunities to enhance the skills of both the emerging and incumbent workforce;

- Employ a systematic approach to provide appropriate information, guidance, and solutions customized to meet the needs of local business and industry customers;
- Work collaboratively with workforce system partners to eliminate duplication of effort and services;
- Coordinate messaging about workforce system alignment in the HCWDB region; and
- Establish metrics for business services team members that will allow the HCWDB to measure outcomes and improve team performance.

### **Work Based Learning Activities**

The High Country WDB currently has special ARPA grant funds specifically for work-based learning activities including incumbent worker grants (IWG), on-the-job training (OJT), and work experience (WEX). These funds are specifically designed to serve small businesses with 25 or fewer employees. In addition, regular program funds can be utilized for work-based learning activities. The HCWDB anticipates these funds will assist in increasing the number of local businesses served by the NCWorks system.

Work based learning is an effective program service to increase skills and provide better prepared/training job seekers and align with the Governor’s NC Job Ready Initiative. The Board’s policies for each of these initiatives can be found in the on the [Board’s website](#). It is expected that service providers will put emphasis on these components for this grant. Work experience expenditures related to youth programs will be identified in service provider contracts to reflect the required and expected expenditure levels.

### **Rapid Response Services**

WIOA law defines Rapid Response Activity in Section 3 Definitions (51) as: The term “rapid response activity” means an activity provided by a State, or by an entity designated by a State, with funds provided by the State under section 134(a)(1)(A), in the case of a permanent closure or mass layoff at a plant, facility, or enterprise, or a natural or other disaster, that results in mass job dislocation, in order to assist dislocated workers in obtaining reemployment as soon as possible, with services including:

(A) the establishment of onsite contact with employers and employee representatives (i) immediately after the State is notified of a current or projected permanent closure or mass layoff; or (ii) in the case of a disaster, immediately after the State is made aware of mass job dislocation as a result of such disaster; (B) the provision of information on and access to available employment and training activities; (C) assistance in establishing a labor-management committee, voluntarily agreed to by labor and management, with the ability to devise and implement a strategy for assessing the employment and training needs of dislocated workers and obtaining services to meet such needs; (D) the provision of emergency assistance adapted to the particular closure, layoff, or disaster; and (E) the provision of assistance to the local community in developing a coordinated response and in obtaining access to State economic development assistance.

Rapid Response Services are also delivered to businesses and employees of companies that are experiencing downsizing through layoffs or closure and may have also been impacted by a Worker Adjustment & Retraining Notification (WARN) issued by the state of North Carolina. Coordination of the Rapid Response teams and operation of the Trade Adjustment Assistance program across the state is the role of NCDOC-DWS. The selected WIOA service provider will be expected to assist in coordinating these outreach teams. NCWorks Career Centers shall provide the following Rapid Response Services to employees of businesses issuing WARN notices or experiencing layoffs or closures, in conjunction with other appropriate partners:

- Reviewing affected workers' assistance needs;
- Coordinating and conducting Rapid Response workshop presentations to assist with career transition, job search tools and skills, résumé preparation, and interviewing techniques;
- Assessing re-employment prospects for workers in the local community;
- Providing information on available resources to meet the short and long-term needs of affected workers;
- Establishing a process of referring affected employees to the NCWorks System;
- Developing recruitment/job development activities including job fairs, positive recruitments, job lead development, and general recruitment notifications; and
- Providing Rapid Response information with appropriate information relating to potential dislocations, available adjustment assistance, services, and when appropriate, information on the TAA program and the North American Free Trade (NAFTA).

A [NC Rapid Response Business Engagement & Solutions Guide](#) has been developed to assist in coordination and delivery of services and includes examples of employee needs surveys.

## **Youth Services**

WIOA youth services must be competitively procured. The focus of the youth formula-funded program under WIOA is placed heavily on out-of-school youth, work-based learning opportunities, and additional program elements. Key features of the program design are outlined in Section 129 of the Act. The structure of the program is designed so that each youth receives an objective assessment and an individual service strategy with the objective to prepare youth for postsecondary education and/or employment. Proposals should include innovative ideas along with integration and partnerships to carry out the program.

North Carolina WDBs has developed a [Youth & Young Adult Framework](#) to provide organizations a baseline of services and guidelines for delivering youth services. Organizations should reference this document for additional details on youth services. A youth resource section can also be found on the NC Association of Workforce Development Boards [website](#).

WIOA legislation calls for youth programs that focus on the following:

- Significantly increased services to out-of-school youth ages 16-24;
- High school dropout recovery;
- Achievement of recognized post-secondary credentials;
- Career pathways and work-based learning tied to a systematic approach that offers youth a comprehensive set of service strategies;
- Closer linkages to the local labor markets; and
- Required connections between WIOA-funded youth programs and the one-stop system providing information on the full array of appropriate services that are available to youth.

It is important to note two requirements with respect to WIOA Youth programs:

1. At least seventy-five percent (75%) of WIOA youth funds must be expended on providing workforce investment activities and services for out-of-school youth (unless local waiver is received).
2. At least twenty percent (20%) of total allocated WIOA youth funds must be expended on paid or unpaid work based learning activities that have as a component academic and occupational education for both in-school and out-of-school youth which may include the following: employment opportunities such as work experiences during the summer and throughout the school year; pre-apprenticeship programs; internships and job shadowing; and on the job training.

NOTE: North Carolina recently received a time limited waiver from DOL regarding flexibility of the out-of-school expenditure requirement, by reducing it to fifty percent (50%). This in turn allows more enrollments/expenditures on in-school youth. The High Country region is in the process of applying for this waiver to NCDWS. If approved, service providers will have the option to serve more in-school youth pending an approved plan of services. Please propose your budget based on the preferred service delivery of serving in

and out-of-school youth. Funding allocations will be distributed at a level that ensures the minimum expenditure requirements are met. Proposals that still maintain a focus on serving out-of-school youth are strongly encouraged.

## **Eligibility**

Service providers may use youth funds to provide services for out-of-school youth between the ages of 16-24 and in-school youth between the ages of 16-21 that meet the federal WIOA eligibility criteria. Suitability factors should also be considered when making a determination for enrollment.

*Note: The out-of-school youth definition removes the low-income requirement for several categories (making them very similar to those of adults). Most often, the target population of 16-24 year old out-of-school individuals define themselves as “young adults.”*

Out-of-School Youth means an individual who is not attending any school and is between the ages of 16 and 24 and exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

1. A school dropout;
2. A youth who is within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter;
3. A recipient of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent who is a low-income individual *and* is basic skills deficient or an English language learner;
4. An individual who is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system;
5. A homeless individual, a homeless child or youth, a runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, a child eligible for assistance under section 447 of the Social Security Act (42 USC 677) or in an out-of-home placement. (*Defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 USC 14043e-(6)); (as defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance (42 USC 1134a (2));*
6. An individual who is pregnant or parenting;
7. A youth who is an individual with a disability;
8. A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment. *Note: per North Carolina guidance.*

Dropouts attending Adult Basic Skills are considered Out of School youth.

In-School Youth means an individual who is attending school (as defined by state law); between the ages of 16 and 21; who is low income *and* one or more of the following:

1. Basic skills deficient;
2. An English language learner;
3. An offender;
4. A homeless individual, a homeless child or youth, a runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, a child eligible for assistance under section 447 of the Social Security Act (42 USC 677) or in an out-of-home placement. *(Defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 USC 14043e-(6)); (as defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance (42 USC 1134a (2));*
5. Pregnant or parenting;
6. A youth who is an individual with a disability;
7. An individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment. *Note: per North Carolina guidance.*

Students attending post-secondary school (regardless of their basic skills deficient status) are considered In School youth.

Selected service providers will be expected to continue services with currently enrolled youth participants.

### **Service Delivery**

It is the goal of NCWorks youth services to provide activities to enable young adults to be work-ready and prepared for their future. Provided services will help young adults access opportunities for work-based learning, complete industry recognized credentials, and enter employment in demand occupations. NCWorks youth services in the High Country area will be housed within the career center and should be designed in a manner that integrates young adults in order to receive the full range of services. Integration with other program staff, such as the adult program for referrals and with business services for work-based learning and connections with employers, will be necessary to meet expectations.

With the focus moved to older, out-of-school youth, it is likely this population will be visiting the NCWorks Career Center seeking career services. Appropriately trained staff and customer flow of the center will be important in identifying which customers may be most appropriate for receiving youth-funded services/elements.

WIOA requires the following fourteen (14) elements to support the success of youth. While every youth may not need every element, providers are required to either provide or



connect youth to organizations that meet their identified needs. Proposals must identify an initial plan of how the following elements will be addressed.

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of a school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a certificate of attendance for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential;
2. Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services;
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education which may include the following:  
  
Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year; Pre-apprenticeship programs; Internships and job shadowing; and On-the-job training opportunities.
4. Occupational skills training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized post-secondary credentials that are aligned with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area;
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities;
7. Supportive services;
8. Adult mentoring for a period of participation and a subsequent period for a total of no less than 12 months;
9. Follow up services for no less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling;
11. Financial literacy education;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration; and
14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

*Note: Youth programs should incorporate the same in demand occupational training areas that apply to the adult/dislocated worker program. All customers interested in receiving WIOA scholarship assistance must apply for a Pell Grant, and if awarded, be applied to the cost of training.*

Respondents' proposals should reflect "an age continuum of services" and age-appropriate activities based on the expectation that youth may be enrolled in WIOA services for the time period determined to successfully complete their service strategy. Planned services and activities should be designed to meet the needs of in and out-of-school youth, ages 16-24, recognizing serving younger in-school youth would have a different service strategy. The intensity and methods of delivering WIOA services should be flexible to respond to the individual needs of youth as they age and develop. A variety of workforce development activities should be available to help youth identify personal and vocational interests and begin to clarify long-term employment goals. Negotiating the transition from school to the workforce requires more than the acquisition of skills specific to an occupation. It is also necessary for youth to master the developmental tasks associated with cognitive, emotional, and social maturity that are critical to long-term employment success.

Many young adults that are disconnected from education and employment may demonstrate a need for supportive services in order to successfully begin, carry out, or complete their service strategy. Service providers should collaborate with partner agencies on meeting these needs prior to use of WIOA funds. Common types of supportive services include childcare, transportation, and emergency assistance.

Proposals should demonstrate linkages with the public schools, alternative schools, and various training providers to extend and enhance learning opportunities as part of a year-round strategy to improve academic achievement and build connections between work and learning. Respondents are expected to build and strengthen partnerships with community organizations in order to effectively recruit, engage, and sustain in and out-of-school youth in successful completion of WIOA activities. Organizations should develop a plan that provides outreach to underserved young adult populations in the region.

Service providers are also expected to assist in workforce system building activities with education and partners. Activities should include, but are not limited to, partnerships with schools to provide workforce information and resources, assisting with career fairs, hosting workshops, Career Pathways, and the NCWorks system. Proposals should incorporate activities that demonstrate the provider's ability to successfully engage and contribute to the development of workforce services throughout the region.

Service providers are expected to provide 12 months of follow-up services for all youth. Services should be designed to assist customers in entering and retaining employment or education. Under WIOA measures, successful follow-up is a critical component that should be seen as equally important as services prior to exit.

## **Program Requirements**

**Eligibility Verification/Documentation:** Selected service providers are required to use NCWorks for all aspects of documentation and tracking of services. Service providers are responsible for determining, verifying, and certifying WIOA eligibility for each youth applicant by obtaining acceptable records/ documents to verify each required eligibility item. Verification documents and other necessary paperwork must be maintained in NCWorks.

Documentation of services, referrals, progress, activities, and follow-up will be entered in NCWorks. Documentation should provide information related to successes and barriers related to the completion of the service plan along with potential next steps of services.

**Assessments:** WIOA requires a thorough and in-depth assessment of the academic level, skill levels, and service needs of each youth at the time of enrollment into WIOA activities that help develop the sequence of services and interventions. Initial/entry assessment will include basic skills, work readiness skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, barriers to employment, family situation, occupational interests and aptitudes, financial resources and needs, supportive service needs, and developmental needs.

This information should be acquired through various means, including, but not limited to, standardized tests, structured interviews, behavioral observations, inventories, career guidance instruments, performance-based or competency-based assessment tools, and where the information is current and reliable, assessment results from another service provider (school or agency). Follow-up assessment should occur as appropriate to track progress and update service delivery plans.

**Service Strategy:** Each youth enrolled will have an individualized plan of services and activities (an appropriate mix of the fourteen required program elements), including appropriate learning objectives and goals, based on the entry assessment information. Service plans should be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the youth as they move through WIOA and should be updated at least every six months. Each plan will identify educational goals that lead to credentials, selected learning objectives, work-based learning (when provided) and provide preparation for unsubsidized employment. The plan will set clear and realistic goals for educational advancement, entry into employment in a targeted industry, and continued learning and development. Service Plans should be developed and updated in NCWorks.

**Comprehensive Case Management:** The WIOA service provider will provide comprehensive case management services as part of the year-round strategy to support and assist youth to attain meaningful outcomes. Given the wide range of developmental stages of youth between the ages of 16-24, staff must be flexible and aware of age appropriate expectations.

Staff is expected to work closely with youth to provide support and guidance, address needs and barriers, solve problems, serve as role models, and assist in the attainment of the objectives and goals agreed upon in their plan. Regular personal contact between staff and the young person is essential. Based on the case management relationship, the youth

should be aware that he/she has support and accountability in working to achieve his/her personal goals. While the use of texting and social platforms is allowed, there is greatest value with face-to-face service delivery.

Primary case management functions include services coordination, advising and counseling, advocacy, follow-up and accurate and timely record keeping. Staff are to be informed of, and adhere to, professional standards of client confidentiality and safeguarding of personal and confidential information.

Branding/Marketing: WIOA youth services in NC have developed a system wide youth name and branding strategy. Selected providers will be expected to participate in using the identified name and materials. WIOA youth services has been branded as “NCWorks NextGen.”

Performance Measures: The High Country WDB negotiated our local performance goals with DWS for PY2023 federal measures. While PY2024 goals have currently not been set, it is expected that the goals will be a slight increase.

## **Reports**

Monthly and Quarterly Reports: It is expected that routine monthly and quarterly written programmatic reports will be developed to include WIOA Common Measures, career services, career center traffic, business services and other key performance indicators. HCWDB will work closely with selected service providers to design and administer these reports.

Financial Reports: Financial reports and invoices for reimbursement will be prepared and submitted to the HCWDB office by the 10th day of the following month and include the following:

- Monthly Invoices by funds source to include budget amounts by line item, monthly expenditures by line item, year to date expenses by line item, and accrued expenses.
- Summary and detailed accounting reports by fund source generated from your organization's general ledger that matches the monthly invoices submitted for reimbursement.
- Monthly youth work experience expenditure report

## **Performance Measures: WIOA**

WIOA establishes primary indicators of performance for all programs. Performance and accountability guidance can be found at [TEGL 10-16](#).

Local areas negotiated performance levels with DWS for PY23. Performance goals on all indicators must be met in order to pass performance. All individuals who received at least one staff assisted service are included in the calculation of performance measures. The primary indicators include:

Adults/Dislocated Workers/Youth

- Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit
- Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit
- Measurable Skills Gain during participation
- Credential Attainment Rate within 4 Quarters after Exit
- Employer Effectiveness

## High Country's Negotiated WIOA Performance Measure Goals for PY 22/23

	Title I – Programs					
	Adult		Dislocated Worker		Youth	
	PY 2022	PY 2023	PY 2022	PY 2023	PY 2022	PY 2023
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	76.5%	77.0%	68.0%	69.0%	74.0%	75.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	75.0%	76.0%	73.0%	74.0%	76.0%	77.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$6,700	\$6,700	\$4,200	\$4,300
Credential Attainment Rate	68.0%	69.0%	69.6%	70.1%	55.0%	56.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	51.0%	52.0%	54.5%	55.5%	50.0%	50.0%

	Title III - Program	
	Wagner-Peyser	
	PY 2022	PY 2023
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	62.5%	63.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	62.5%	63.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$5,500	\$5,500

\*The High Country WDB negotiated our local performance goals with DWS for PY2023 federal measures. While PY2024 goals have currently not been set, it is expected that the goals will be a slight increase.

Additional local measures may be developed by the NCWorks Commission for each local area or by the local WDB.

## **Fiscal and Administrative Management**

A number of changes to the federal OMB circulars took place on December 19, 2014. New Uniform guidance was issued in 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 2900. The Employment and Training Administration issued TEGL 15-14 that gives guidance on this reform. In summary, 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900 replaces the following: A-103 & A-89, A-87, A-133 & A-50, A-110, A-21, A-110 and A-122.

### **Internal Financial Management**

All subrecipients are required to conduct internal financial management reviews. The purpose is to provide adequate internal controls and ensure compliance with the following areas related to WIOA funds and services.

- Provisions of the WIOA and its regulations;
- Provisions of the WIOA Contract;
- Applicable state and workforce development board policies;
- Accepted financial management and accounting practices; and
- Compliance with 2 CFR 200

Internal financial management procedures shall be sufficient to prevent fraud and abuse. All reports of information creating suspicion of or instances of criminal misconduct must be reported immediately to the HCWDB, NCDOD-DWS, and USDOL.

Internal financial management procedures must also ensure that auditable and otherwise adequate records are maintained which support all expenditures of WIOA funds and confirm adherence to policies regarding allowable costs and allocations of cost to proper cost categories. It is necessary to assure that accounting records are supported by source documentation for each transaction. In addition, records should be traceable to documentation and maintained in such a manner as to provide a complete and accurate audit trail during any internal or external examination.

The WIOA subrecipient shall document all internal financial compliance reviews.

If applicable, the respondent will provide a copy of the organization's Cost Allocation Plan. For-profit organizations will need to provide any proposed profit within the budget document. Proposed profit will be paid up to and shall not exceed 8%.

**Internal Program Management:** Subrecipients are required to establish internal program management procedures to assure compliance with contract requirements, delivery of high-quality services to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth and achievement of planned outcomes. Internal program management procedures must also ensure that auditable and otherwise adequate records are maintained to support the eligibility of all WIOA customers and confirm adherence to specific audit requirements and time limitations.

**Audit Submission:** As a recipient of WIOA funds, subrecipients must have an annual financial and compliance audit performed. The audits must be conducted in accordance with auditing standards set forth under the Single Audit Act Amendment of 1996 and revised OMB Circular A-133 at 29 CFR 95.26 for institutions of higher education, hospitals and other non-profit organizations and at 29 CFR 97.26 for units of state and local government.

This requirement will be met by providing the HCWDB with a copy of the annual audit according to OMB Circular A-133. For all for profit businesses, WIOA subrecipients must have an annual financial and compliance audit performed under Generally Accepted Accounting Standards by an independent auditor. A copy of the audit will be forwarded to the HCWDB. The audit should be submitted within 30 days after the completion of the audit, but no later than six months after the end of the audit period. State-funded organizations such as community colleges should address their audit requirements if different from the above.

**Monitoring Procedures:** In accordance with WIOA Contract Monitoring and Audit Procedures and the WIOA regulations (20 CFR, Part 652, et al and 20 CFR 667.410), WIOA subrecipient staff must cooperate with any monitoring, inspection, audit, or investigation of activities related to WIOA contracts. These activities may be conducted by the NCDODS, USDOL, the HCWDB or their designated representatives. This cooperation includes access to, examination of, and/or photocopying of books, records, files, documents, property or equipment related to all aspects of WIOA-funded activities under this contractual agreement.

The HCWDB has developed a systematic monitoring system for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of services. Monitoring is the quality control system whereby the HCWDB gathers and analyzes information to detect problems, identify strengths and weaknesses, and propose improvements to the services. Monitoring activities are conducted periodically to determine whether services are in compliance with contractual agreements, HCWDB policies, WIOA regulations, and HCWDB requirements. HCWDB monitors performance, programmatic, and fiscal activities. In many instances, the different types of monitoring are interrelated and conducted simultaneously.

**Records Retention:** The following records and documents must be maintained for WIOA-funded customers and employees. They must be available for monitoring and review by the HCWDB and must be retained, subject to audit, for five (5) years following the final audit of the contract. If any aspect of the program is under investigation or in the process of audit resolution and/or debt collection, the WIOA Staff is required to retain records after the five (5) year period and until the final audit resolution of all disallowed and/or questioned costs are paid or accepted as allowable. Please see below for a listing:

- General ledger or equivalent;
- Cash receipts and cash disbursements journals/reports or equivalent;
- Bank statement, reconciliation, deposit slips and canceled checks for each bank account through which WIOA funds were received or disbursed;
- All contracts with the HCWDB/HCCOG including all amendments;
- All financial reports and documentation supporting requests for reimbursement;



- Payroll records including Individual Earnings Record, Employee Withholding Authorization (W-4), FICA reporting forms, federal and state withholding, Unemployment taxes, Employee Personnel Files, Time Records and Employee Time/Salary Allocation plans;
- Invoices and/or supporting data for non-payroll disbursements;
- Customers' records including participant data forms, verification/documentation items, assessments tests and results, the Individualized Employment Strategy and documentation of outcomes; and
- Any other financial records or documents that are related to the contracted funds as requested by the HCWDB.

All WIOA-funded contracts between the High Country Workforce Development Board and Service Providers will be conducted on a cost reimbursement basis only. However, related to for-profit organizations, profit is paid based on pay-for performance measures which are put in place at each program year.

### **Insurance Requirements**

**Insurance:** It is strongly encouraged that WIOA customers are covered by accident insurance while participating in WIOA-funded activities. OJT employers must provide proof of workers' compensation or comparable coverage prior to execution of the OJT contract. No WIOA client will be required or permitted to work or receive services or training in a building or surroundings or under working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to the client's health or safety. All participants placed in paid work experiences or internships, must be covered by workers compensation provided by the service provider.

**Automobiles:** WIOA service providers using motor vehicles in conducting services shall provide automobile insurance that clearly specifies that the HCWDB, HCCOG and/or staff are held harmless against claims arising from ownership, maintenance, or use of said vehicle.

**Bonding Insurance Requirements:** WIOA service providers must meet bonding requirements as required through the OMB Circulars or other applicable regulations. Public agencies are required by the North Carolina General Statute to be bonded. Non-governmental agencies shall procure a blanket fidelity bond, position bond, or name schedule fidelity bond for all persons or positions authorized to receive or disburse WIOA funds. The service provider must maintain all bonding in force for the period of the contractual agreement. The proposed service provider must submit a written notice to the HCWDB within fifteen (15) calendar days prior to any reduction in the limits stated on the bonding document. Similarly, the service provider must provide written notice of any cancellation of the bonding policy to the HCWDB immediately upon receipt of the cancellation notices.

**Program Income Requirement:** USDOL requires that all income generated under any WIOA contract shall be reported and used to further program objectives. Any organizations proposing program income must provide a set of measurable deliverables. Program income is required to be spent prior to use of WIOA funds.

For Profit: service providers proposing for profit contracts must propose criteria/deliverables for profit as part of the budget narrative that can be negotiated/finalized upon award. All criteria proposed must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART goals). The High Country WDB will pay up to, and no more than eight percent (8%) profit of the WIOA Service Contract. Criteria for profit will be reviewed and included in negotiating final contracts. Profit is not an entitlement by virtue of receipt of a contract or level of expenditure of funds. Performance measures will need to be met prior to profit payment. The criteria and timelines for payment will be determined during the contract negotiation process.

Authority to Re-Capture and Re-Distribute Funds: The WDB has the authority to re-capture and re-distribute funds based on the following criteria not being met or changing customer needs across the region:

- Program changes
- Staffing levels
- Enrollments
- Caseloads
- Spending levels

### **Property Management Requirements**

The WIOA service provider agrees to maintain careful accountability of all WIOA purchased non-expendable property (property with a life expectancy of one year or more and a unit cost of \$500.00 or more) and to maintain an inventory of all properties issued by the HCWDB or subsequently acquired with WIOA funds. Acquisition of non-expendable property with a unit cost of \$1,000.00 (including taxes, shipping, and handling costs) or more must be approved by HCWDB staff, prior to the purchase. Any disposal of WIOA property must be according to applicable federal, state, and local disposal procedures. Any revenues derived from the sale of property purchased with WIOA funds must be used in WIOA service delivery for the program(s) which funded the original purchase.

Any single piece of equipment that costs greater than \$5,000 and to be purchased with WIOA funds must be approved by the HCWDB and the NCDWC-DWS, depending on cost.

The WIOA service provider will be responsible for maintaining an accurate inventory of all WIOA property in their possession. A copy of the updated annual inventory shall be submitted to the HCWDB staff upon completion. The HCWDB will maintain a fixed-asset listing to be verified for physical location and serviceability at the WIOA service provider facility at least annually.

In the event property purchased with WIOA funds is stolen or destroyed by criminal act, the WIOA subrecipient will notify appropriate law enforcement officials immediately. The HCWDB must be notified within three (3) working days of discovering the loss or damage. A copy of the police report will be maintained as documentation of loss, and a copy forwarded to the HCWDB.

The WIOA service provider agrees to pay for or replace any property purchased with WIOA funds that is lost, damaged, or destroyed through negligence.

## **Budgets and Invoices**

Respondents to this RFP should submit a combined Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, and/or Center Operations budget that is included with the RFP up to, but not greater than the projected available funding for each program as identified in the chart provided. The amounts on the funding chart are intended to be used as guidelines for respondents and are subject to revision based upon final notification of WIOA funding availability from the NCDOC-DWS. The budget spreadsheet document will provide a summary of your proposed cost by line item with additional worksheets to provide additional back up detail of projected budgets. If additional narrative detail is needed, please provide that as well. It is understood that participant expenses will be difficult to accurately predict at this time; however, a projection of these expenses based on plans for services to customers is requested. More detailed budgets will be developed after the service provider is selected and allocation amounts are more defined.

Proposed budgets must be within the amounts indicated and must be reasonable based on proposed staffing, service levels, and service delivery plans. The amount awarded will be determined on a competitive basis, but not necessarily based on the lowest proposed cost. Subsequent revisions and negotiations of final contract budgets may be required due to funding award decisions.

Since this is a reimbursement contract, service providers will be expected to incur the costs for all program services and make payments on behalf of the enrolled customers, then report each month's expenses by the 10th day of the following month for each of the fund sources in the contract. The monthly reimbursement submission will include a line-item invoice, with budgets, current month expenses, unexpended balances, and accrued expenses. As backup to the invoice, a summary line-item expenditure reports and detailed line item expenditure reports by fund source that support the invoice amounts should be submitted each month.

WIOA funds are distributed through a process of drawdowns from US DOL and then from the State to the HCCOG. Since this is a reimbursement process, the time from incurred expense to receipt of reimbursement may take up to 30 to 60 days. Bidding organizations must have fiscal ability to operate under this timeframe.

Since the program year and fiscal year runs from July 1st through the following June 30th, final payment for each program year's WIOA expenses will occur with the June invoice that will be submitted by the service provider to HCCOG during the month of July along with end of year Financial Closeout documents. Service providers are expected to meet, but not exceed, contracted amounts for each program year.

Although not expected, if any part of the work covered by this request is to be sub-granted, the grantee shall identify the sub-granting organization and a sub-grant agreement must be

entered into between the two parties. Copies of the sub-grant agreements must be submitted to the HCWDB for approval, prior to execution of any sub-grant agreements.

## **Proposal Format and Required Forms**

Proposals should include all items listed below, in the order shown. The following forms should be completed with all information requested and executed properly. Proposals that fail to include all applicable forms and information will not be considered. **Please number each page.**

1. PY2023 WIOA Response Packet Cover Sheet
2. Program and Financial Management Form - Carefully review each section. Identify the appropriate agency staff member responsible for compliance.
3. Statement of Work Narrative - If a section does not apply, write "N/A" or "Does Not Apply" by the respective section. Sections include the following:
  - a. Experience and Capacity
  - b. Budget
  - c. NCWorks Career Center Operations
  - d. Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth Services
  - e. Business Services
4. Assurances and Certifications Form - Requires signature of authorized representative.
5. Statement of Compliance Form - Requires signature of authorized representative.
6. Certificate Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion. Lower Tier Covered Transactions - Requires signature of authorized representative.
7. Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace - List the site for the performance of work.
8. Job Descriptions – Complete or provide for each WIOA staff member proposed and indicate the county or counties they will serve.
9. RFP Budget Form - Complete the Budget Summary, supporting worksheets, budget narrative for all costs required to implement the program design.
10. RFP Projected Service Levels Form - Complete Projected Service Levels form.
11. Other: Please attach or provide links to the following items:
  - a) Most recent end of year Financial Statement and copy of last audit;
  - b) Agency Grievance Procedures;
  - c) Copy of Bond Coverage (or explanation of planned coverage if an award is made);
  - d) Agency Personnel and Travel policies;
  - e) Current Organization Chart (Include Equal Opportunity Officer);
  - f) Charter and Bylaws of Organization, attach list of Current Board Members;
  - g) Cost Allocation Plan (if applicable, provide a copy of the agency's approved Indirect Cost Plan);
  - h) Certificate of General Liability Insurance; and
  - i) Certificate of Worker's Compensation Insurance

## PROPOSAL NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

This portion of the proposal should give reviewers a clear picture of the proposed services and the capability of the offeror to deliver the proposed services.

**Proposers should follow the alphabetical and numerical sequence of the format described below.** Provide responses as brief as possible but with enough information to adequately respond to the questions or statements.

In order to provide a clear picture of the program design, program activities/services, anticipated outcomes, and the Proposer's capability of delivering the services, please address all of the following areas in order.

**Please include the question followed by the response. If a question does not apply to plan of services, indicate by N/A.**

### **Evaluation**

The High Country Local Area will utilize a numerical rating system (below) to review RFPs for recommendation to the Workforce Development Board. Board staff and the Executive Committee (and other appointed individuals) will review the proposals and rate them according to the following evaluation factors and make recommendations to the Workforce Development Board.

Organizations will be evaluated on the following sections and point criteria for a total of up to 300 points if bidding on all services. Those only bidding on Operations will have a total of up to 135 points (to include Experience and Capacity; Budget; and NCWorks Operations).

- Experience and Capacity (Maximum of 60 points)
- Budget (Maximum of 20 points)
- Projected Enrollment Goals (Maximum of 25 points)
- NCWorks Operations (Maximum of 55 points)
- Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth Services (Maximum of 100 points)
- Business Services (Maximum of 40 points)

<b>Score</b>	<b>Compliance</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
0	Non-compliant or no response	No response
1	Inadequate Response	Inadequate response; not sufficient; or hard to follow
2	Minimal Response	Lack of detail; minimal; basic completion
3	Medium Partial Response	Objectives partially met/between minimal and full response/average
4	High Partial Response	Objectives met/answered thoroughly and completely
5	Full Response	Objectives exceeded/answered above and beyond with extra detail

*Note: The highest ranked proposal does not equate to awarded contract.*

Proposals will also be evaluated on whether or not basic submission requirements have been met:

- Proposal submitted by the established deadline
- Proposal follows format/instructions
- Proposal includes the following:
  - Cover Sheet
  - Program and Financial Management Form
  - Statement of Work Narrative
  - Assurances/Certifications
  - Statement of Compliance Form
  - Certification Regarding Debarment
  - Certification Regarding Drug Free Workplace
  - Job Descriptions
  - Budget
  - Projected Service Levels
  - Other Attachments

## **Experience and Capacity (To be completed by all bidders) [60 points]**

### A. Experience [30 points]

1. Please provide a description of your organization to include the following details:
  - a) The legal organizational name and legal status;
  - b) Briefly describe your organization's mission, history, and accomplishments. Also include number of years in operation, size of the organization, and the geographic distribution of the service delivery area;
  - c) How the organization is currently funded; and
  - d) Describe how offering services in response to the RFP will fit into the Proposer organization's mission or business plan. Include internal structure including management and supervisory staff positions to be used to operate this program in the HCWDB service area.
  
2. Describe your organization's financial and administrative experience with/to include the following:
  - a) A description of your financial stability and any comments you wish to make about your credit rating, your payment policies, and any recognition you may have received from accrediting or other bodies for organization or financial excellence (please note if you have experienced any financial difficulty in the last five years);
  - b) Your experience managing and accounting for multiple federal, state and local funding sources in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP);
  - c) Your process for conducting self-monitoring for contract performance and compliance;
  - d) Your process for developing and implementing a continuous improvement model; and
  - e) Include references from at least three organizations that have contracted with your organization to provide services similar to those proposed (name of organization, contact person, telephone/email, amount of contract, service(s) provided, and location of services provided).
  
3. Describe experience and current activities or programs administered serving individuals with significant barriers to employment that demonstrates the capability of the Proposer to do the following:
  - a) Serve as NCWorks System Operator (if applicable), including functional supervision of partner programs, facility, and personnel in the HCWDB NCWorks Career Centers; and
  - b) Manage, administer and operate a workforce development program under WIOA to serve adults, dislocated workers, businesses, and youth. Include specific data on outcomes achieved to demonstrate your ability to meet contractual performance standards for WIOA services or comparable programs.



4. Describe your experience providing oversight of multi-organization staff teams and experience in developing and delivering technical assistance and capacity building with workforce staff and organizations.
5. Describe how your resources, professional contacts, knowledge of the labor market, and special expertise will support the HCWDB to meet and exceed performance goals for the NCWorks system.
6. If your organization also has a stand-alone or separate location, describe how services may compliment or be integrated to reduce duplication of services.

#### B. Capacity [30 points]

1. Describe resources your organization brings to the workforce system that will assist in the coordination and delivery of services and how the organization as a whole will support the work of staff and the programs.
2. Staffing Plan - Please detail your plan to staff the proposed services for the counties in which your organization is bidding. Please include the following details:
  - a) Number of staff (indicate full time or part time) to include where staff will be housed. If staff will serve more than one center, please indicate this with the appropriate details regarding the locations, time at each center and schedule if known.
  - b) Job descriptions to include, job titles, job duties to be funded under this proposal and range of activities to be performed. Please use provided form.
  - c) Qualifications of key staff to be assigned on-site to this program including education, experience, and any specialized training or certifications specific to workforce service delivery. If your organization will need to hire staff as a result of being awarded a contract, please outline your plan to hire qualified staff.
  - d) Describe how you expect to provide on-going staff training to ensure your staff has access to the most current information, tools, and promising practices.
  - e) Please indicate if any staff costs will be supplemented with other sources of funding.
3. Administrative Capacity - What monitoring and evaluation of the program operations and staff are to be routinely carried out? Include any systems that may be used to track, capture and report performance or outcomes.
4. Fiscal Management and Reporting Capacity - Describe your fiscal system and include the following:
  - a) The process the Proposer uses or proposes to use to timely capture and report fiscal information to the HCWDB's administrative entity;
  - b) What systems are in place to ensure fiscal accountability, timely, and appropriate expenditure of WIOA funds;

- c) Describe how the Proposer will internally track both actual and projected obligations and encumbrances;
  - d) Describe the Proposer's ability and method it would use to repay disallowed costs if such disallowances are identified in the monitoring or audit of the contract; and
  - e) Proposers must have the capacity to track expenses down to the participant level either within their organization's accounting system or alternative tracking system such as Gazelle or other proprietary software designed for that purpose. Please describe how this will be accomplished.
5. For potential new providers: Provide a schedule for addressing start-up priorities including, but not limited to, staffing, staff training, and purchasing. Explain how the transition of current participants from previous service providers will smoothly shift to the new service provider, including meetings, changes in delivery of services, and timeframe during the first quarter.

For current providers: Describe any plans necessary to smoothly transition to the new program year to include any anticipated changes and implementing the proposed program goals not identified elsewhere in the proposal.

6. If multiple contracts are awarded, describe efforts to partner on a regional level with other service providers.

## **Budget [20 points]**

1. Proposers should complete the budget workbook in Excel (2023 RFP Budget Summary and/or the Operations Budget Summary) to include the line-item budget summary and the detailed worksheets for the budget proposed. Please name PY 2023 WIOA Budget-Organization Name. Name can be abbreviated. The workbook includes Adult, Dislocated Worker, In-School Youth, Out of School Youth, ARPA Substance Use, ARPA Work-based Learning, and a separate budget workbook for operations. Your budget should not exceed the projected funding amounts for the counties that you propose to serve. Please develop a single budget to serve proposed counties for which you are bidding on.

*Note: The Excel workbook has several worksheets, each labeled on the worksheet tab at the bottom of the screen. Please complete all tabs in order to provide details of the budget summary. The detail worksheets are sequential based on the line items on the summary worksheet and formulated to calculate the totals. The Staff Salaries and Staff Fringe are included on the Staffing Worksheet. All the line items related to Equipment and Supplies is on the Equip-Supplies worksheet. There is not a worksheet for Indirect Costs or the Profit line items.*

If you are proposing to be reimbursed for Indirect Costs, you must submit a copy of the approved indirect cost plan that has been approved by the federal cognizant agency for your organization for indirect costs to be considered for payment.

The purpose of the budget narrative is to describe to reviewers how the budget is related to the proposed activities. The budget narrative should identify the line items indicated in the overall budget on the budget form and describe and justify the expenses included in the line item.

2. For-profit proposals must include a narrative of your proposed profit along with the proposed deliverables that must be met before profit will be reimbursed to your organization. The profit may not exceed eight percent (8%) of the total project costs. Deliverables may be broken down into smaller increments of the total in order to receive a profit payment at predetermined achievement points. If you plan to do this, please provide the details in your narrative.
3. If the bidder proposes to use a direct cost allocation plan, describe in detail any proposed direct cost allocation plan to be utilized when costs are allocable to more than one program/funding source. Identify common costs to be included in the plan. Applicants must follow the guidelines established in the 2 CFR 200.

## **NCWorks Career Center Operations [55 points]**

### **A. Delivery**

1. Define exceptional customer service. Describe how you provide exceptional customer service for job seekers and employers.
2. Provide a summary highlighting the Proposer's vision of NCWorks Career Center Operations. This may also include strategies of meeting WIOA performance measures, customer service, target customers, recruitment, staff training, and planned outcomes and/or goals for the NCWorks Career Center.
3. How does your organization foresee shared supervision in the NCWorks Centers between the service provider staff and the NCDWS staff within the "functional supervision" model adopted by the State? How will your organization handle potential conflict with other center partners?
4. Job seeker and employer workshops and product box services are expected to be an integral part of the HCWDB NCWorks Career Centers. Describe process for ensuring that a "healthy" mix of workshops and services are made available to meet the needs of customers on a regular basis. Describe any plans related to delivery, topics, and outreach.
5. Describe your process for initially assessing universal customers' needs, providing basic career services, and directing customers to the appropriate services.
6. Describe the process of referrals to include that appropriate community partner referrals are made when needs are identified and how referrals may be tracked or followed up.
7. Over the past few years traffic in the career centers has consistently decreased. What plans does your organization have to outreach to potential new customers and current customers to increase activity/traffic at the centers?
8. Complete attached budget sheet/narrative for expenses related to Operations.

### **B. Partnerships**

1. The operator will need to be a leader, collaborator, and active partner at area NCWorks partner meetings. Describe how this may best be accomplished.
2. Describe your organization's current level of partnership with each of the WIOA mandated partners in your area and how this may result in increased service delivery. Also identify partnerships with other organizations in the High Country region that may assist in goals of service delivery or system building activities. Describe any new partnerships that you will prioritize during the contract period.

3. Describe instances, projects or collaborative relationships in which your organization has led or worked closely with one or more WIOA system partners or other workforce and economic development entities on cooperative workforce development projects, programs or initiatives. Include the role of your organization and outcomes.

## **Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth Services [100 points]**

### A. Program Description

1. Provide a summary description of the proposed project along with projected activities/goals/outcomes desired for each program.
2. Describe the target population for each program and geographic area to be served.

### B. Statement of Work

Proposals shall include a Statement of Work narrative detailing all aspects of the proposed project design. The Statement of Work will include all aspects of the program and services outlined in this RFP and other information deemed relevant. The purpose of the Statement of Work is to provide an in-depth description of the design of services, to demonstrate how requirements will be met, and to describe the process for achieving the WIOA Performance Outcomes for all programs. Responses should include any specifics that may be handled differently regarding youth services. Please address the following components in the statement of work and how they will be carried out:

1. Describe how your organization will manage the eligibility and enrollment process for all programs.
  - A. Describe how you will ensure that all customers enrolled are eligible and appropriate for WIOA services. Please include information about staff training and supervision related to the eligibility and enrollment process.
  - B. Describe the assessment process and identify current and previous assessment tools and methods. Include a description of any tools or methods used to determine the following: levels of basic skills, work readiness skills, interests and aptitudes, occupational skills and supportive service needs. Explain how these assessments inform the service strategy for participants.
  - C. Describe how the development of the Individual Employment Plan will be conducted and how it will be maintained to reflect the customer's goals around education and employment.
2. Describe how you will serve large numbers of varying individuals who will receive career services within an integrated service delivery system. In your description discuss any challenges in serving individuals, partnerships and collaborations in place, or those that are needed to provide outreach and recruitment for service delivery, along with strategies/plans for serving individuals with barriers to also include:

- Individuals with limited English proficiency
  - Individuals with disabilities
  - Dropouts
  - At-Risk Youth/Young Adults (with focus on out of school youth to meet 80% expenditure requirement)
  - Low-income individuals
  - Persons with limited literacy skills/basic skills deficient
  - Offenders
  - Highly skilled job seekers
3. Describe any innovations and strategies that have been found to increase the likelihood of success for individuals to include motivation and support to maintain engagement of participants.
  4. Describe how your organization will manage the provision of WIOA funded occupational skills training services for all programs. Include specifics about determining a need for training; assisting the customer to select an appropriate occupational sector; developing a comprehensive individual employment plan to include the training services; financial aid; and management of the ITA process. How are career pathways included in the training process?
  5. Describe services/case management on how you will engage the customer to be successful with the educational component/credential attainment (to include all levels of educational programs), with the completion of measurable skills gains, and with the transition from training to employment (entered employment/wages). Do you anticipate services to be provided any differently for youth?
  6. Describe the types of planned follow-up activities for individuals who enter employment to ensure participants remain employed through the one-year follow up period (retained employment). Also describe follow-up activities for those who do not enter employment (including time frames). Be specific in your response regarding the one-year of required follow-up for youth programs.
  7. Describe how work-based learning may be integrated into service delivery for all programs.
    - a. If budgeted, how you will provide paid on the job training including the pre-award analysis, contract development, skill gap analysis, training plan development, monitoring, evaluation and any additional details that demonstrate your ability to successfully offer on the job training. Will OJT be offered to youth participants?
    - b. Describe how programs will ensure that the 20% expenditure requirement for youth funding will be met for youth programs in regard to work-based

- learning. How are work sites selected and monitored? How are conflicts handled?
- c. Describe past successes and challenges in implementing work-based learning and meeting expenditure requirements (especially regarding youth).
  - d. Provide any other program design ideas regarding short term work-based learning options that you think would result in employment.
8. Describe outreach strategies specific to dislocated workers, to include the Category 13.
  9. Youth Program Elements: Briefly describe how and by whom each of the 14 elements will be provided to support career readiness. Indicate if they will be provided by the service provider, by referral, or in partnerships. Please identify agencies being used for referrals and partnerships. In your response, include any leadership development or opportunities for young adults to participate in community service, positive social activities, peer-centered activities, classroom development, and soft skills training.
  10. Describe strategies that will ensure services are in alignment with current local and regional labor market demands. Please identify in demand occupations for the area.
  11. Provide a narrative describing plans for service delivery that results in achievement of enrollment goals, performance measures and outreach and recruitment to target groups. Please identify any unique recruiting timelines and strategies for maintaining an active caseload through the year for all programs in each county.
  12. Describe the process of referrals to include ensuring that applicants that cannot be served by WIOA programs are referred to appropriate services elsewhere; that appropriate community partner referrals are made when needs are identified; and how referrals may be tracked or followed up.
  13. Describe how engaging with business and industry relates to the success of services for adults/dislocated workers and youth.
  14. Describe how your Title I funded staff will work in cooperation with Title III (DWS) staff members in an Integrated Service Delivery environment under the daily supervision of the NCWorks Career Center Manager.
  15. Describe your experience with keying participant data (to include eligibility documents, notes, activities, etc.) into NCWorks Online or other electronic management system. Include how personal identifiable information is protected and confidentiality standards are maintained.



16. Summarize continuous improvement procedures that will be used to obtain feedback from participants, employers, and other appropriate parties of the responsiveness and effectiveness of the training and services provided.
17. Describe your agency's philosophy regarding responsiveness to requested data; deadlines; corrections to findings; etc.
18. Include any additional indicators of success not previously mentioned. This may include any special projects, partnerships, awards, trainings, etc. that may benefit the organization in providing WIOA services.

## **Business Services [40 points]**

### A. Program Description

1. Provide a description of the proposed business services along with projected goals/outcomes desired.
2. Describe the target population and geographic area to be served.

### B. Business Services Statement of Work

Proposals shall include a Statement of Work narrative detailing all aspects of the proposed project design. The Statement of Work will include all aspects of the program and services outlined in this RFP and other information deemed relevant. The purpose of the Statement of Work is to provide an in-depth description of the design of services, to demonstrate how requirements will be met, and to describe the process for achieving the WIOA Business Services Outcomes. Please address the following components in the statement of work and how they will be carried out:

1. Describe strategies to identify the workforce development and hiring needs of businesses. Include services or strategies that can be provided by the NCWorks System to meet business needs.
2. Describe outreach, collaboration, and processes that will result in successful work-based learning opportunities for WIOA participants, to include a focus on small business for purposes of the ARPA grant. Please also speak to your successes and challenges with On-the-Job Training (OJT) placements. Include how incumbent worker training needs may be identified and addressed.
3. Describe efforts/plans that will support the region's high growth/high demand sectors.
4. Describe what relationships, partnerships, and community group organizations are essential to your outreach efforts to reach businesses and how services are coordinated in efforts of increasing use of the system.
5. Describe your strategies for, and experience with, engaging business and industry in your program. Identify the volume of business served, nature of engagement, types of roles and repeat customers. Explain how employers are involved with your organization as a whole and specifically with program delivery, including career exploration, employment, and retention.

6. According to the 2022 NC Employer Needs Survey, eighty-one percent (81%) of NC employers experienced hiring difficulty in the past twelve (12) months, which is a significant increase from 2019. Describe the strategies and responses of your business engagement staff to local employer concerns you encounter in the community or while at various events who express similar frustrations with the current job market and applicants. Be specific and include what steps you would take and how you will engage with the business beyond a recitation of a list of services.