

**Request for Applications (RFA) for Job Placement Partner
Workforce Intermediary Pilot Program
Questions & Answers**

This document is intended to serve as a “Question & Answer” document for prospective applicants under the RFA for DC Workforce Intermediary – Hospitality Job Placement Partner.

The document responds to written questions submitted electronically by prospective applicants prior to noon on August 12, 2013, as well as written questions submitted during the informational session on August 9, 2013. Additional questions submitted by the deadline set forth in the RFA will added as appropriate.

I. Background (pp. 1-3 of the RFA)

Q I.1: On page 2, the RFP states: “The WIC has elected to implement the hospitality component of the District’s workforce intermediary pilot in two distinct phases – a job placement phase and an occupational training phase.” We are interpreting this to mean that this RFA is only asking for services for job placement and a separate RFA will be released for occupational training. Is this correct? At what point will an RFP be released for the Occupational Training Phase? If this RFP is for both job placement and occupational training, at what point would you expect the occupational training to begin?

A I.1: In addition to this solicitation, the WIC anticipates releasing an Occupational Training RFA prior to the end of 2013.

The Job Placement Partner will be expected to provide short-term training that orients jobseekers to industry standards and expectations. However, funding from this grant may not be used for more extensive or longer-term occupational or work readiness/soft skills training.

The Job Placement Partner is expected to work with training providers and similar organizations, including organizations receiving grants from the WIC under a forthcoming occupational training RFA process, to help place their participants that are successful in meeting the requirements set forth in the approved screening and assessment protocol. However, the organization that is awarded the Job Placement Partner grant may also elect to provide (or continue to provide) industry-specific occupational training that is funded through other sources.

II. Scope of Services (pp. 3-5 of the RFA)

Q II.1: Can the funds be used to train and provide professional development to DC residents? For instance, in order to place a resident at a work site, we would provide x amount of hours of culinary arts training (or customer service, or hospitality, etc.) and x amount of hours of professional development (work place behavior, conflict resolution, etiquette, etc.). Could the proposed funds be used for trainings, or should the funds only be used to actually place the residents at a work site?

Q II.2: Can the Job Placement Partner (JPP) provide soft skills/work readiness and/or occupational specific training to clients to assist with placement and retention?

A II.1 and II.2: Please see A I.1, above.

Q II.3: Can a portion of JPP grant funds be used to provide subsidized work experience/on-the-job training opportunities for program participants prior to placement?

Q II.4: Can a portion of a placed jobseeker's probationary period (if applicable) be subsidized by the JPP grant? If so, can the subsidized wage start at \$8.25 per hour with an increase to \$12.50 upon permanent placement?

A II.3 and II.4: Subsidized work experience or on-the-job training are allowable uses of JPP funding, as long as there is a clear link to overall service delivery plans and required outcomes. Subsidized work experience/on-the-job training is often very resource intensive, and an applicant choosing to propose this service delivery model would need to clearly account for these services in their budget and demonstrate that adequate resources are in place to provide all required services under this solicitation.

In order to count as a placement under Required Outcomes, jobseekers must be employed in a qualifying job for a period of not less than 30 days from the first day of employment that pays an unsubsidized minimum hourly wage of at least \$12.50. Therefore, any subsidized employment would not count towards placement outcomes until these criteria were met. Similarly, in order to count as a retention under Required Outcomes, all of the above criteria would need to be met for a period of no less than six cumulative months.

III. Applicants (pp. 5-6 of the RFA)

Q III.1: Are there any requirements on the length of time that an applicant organization has been operating in order to be eligible to apply and be competitive for the JPP grant?

A III.1: There are no requirements related to the length of time that an applicant organization has been operating in order to be eligible to apply for the JPP grant. As noted on pp. 5-6 of the RFA, priority will be given to applicants that:

- *Have demonstrated experience working with employers to meet employment needs and jobseekers facing challenges;*
- *Are positioned to offer continuous and relevant programming from October 1, 2013 to September, 2014 with four optional one-year extensions based on performance and funding availability; and*
- *Demonstrate measurable outcomes from services provided.*

IV. Eligible Jobseekers (p.6 of the RFA)

Q IV.1: Is there a cap on the number of employed individuals that can be served through the JPP program (e.g. individuals that are not unemployed, but currently employed at a relatively low wage), provided these individuals also meet other eligible jobseeker requirements (e.g. required skills and interest in hospitality occupations, have a household income of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, etc.)?

A IV.1: There is no cap on the number of already employed individuals that can be served through the JPP program, provided that all participants served meet other eligible jobseeker requirements and are placed and/or retained in eligible occupations with eligible employers as defined in the RFA. However, as noted elsewhere in the RFA, the JPP will need to develop and implement an approved Recruitment and Referral Plan that will define participant recruitment sources and processes for screening and assessing eligible participants referred from other organizations. The JPP will not be allowed to recruit already employed individuals (or unemployed individuals) from the general public, but will instead need to work with other organizations that serve both unemployed and underemployed individuals.

V. Eligible Employers and Occupations (p. 7 of the RFA)

Q V.1: Are there specific types of companies for which the JPP would be developing job opportunities? Are there specific North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes by which a company must be categorized to meet eligible employer requirements?

A V.1: In order to qualify as employment in the hospitality sector, a job must be a direct placement with a hotel, convention center, eating/drinking establishment, or similar business (see V. Eligible Employers and Occupations on p. 7 of the RFA). "Similar businesses" provides some flexibility in the type of company or other organization that could qualify as an eligible employer, and there are no specific NAICS codes required for consideration, but the JPP should focus on the types of employers and occupations noted in this solicitation. The WIC reserves the right to determine if a placement and/or retention meets the criteria of eligible employers or occupations in counting towards required outcomes.

Q V.2: On page 7 of the RFA it states a wage rate of \$12.50 per hour is required. Is this an average wage rate or an individual wage rate?

A V.2: All qualifying jobs must pay each eligible jobseeker a minimum hourly wage of at least \$12.50 per hour. This minimum rate is not an average of all jobseekers placed through the Job Placement Partner, but a minimum wage per individual. However, individuals placed in positions that have variable hourly wages, such as waiters or waitresses that rely on tips as a primary source of income, may be counted if their average hourly wage is at least \$12.50 per hour (provided that adequate documentation can be presented to verify this average wage).

Q V.3: Can the WIC provide examples of what “similar businesses” in the hospitality industry would entail for the Eligible Employers and Occupations section?

Q V.4: Will associated hospitality industry occupations be allowed as eligible placements (i.e. meeting planning companies, event design companies and lighting companies, etc.)?

A V.3 and V.4: “Similar businesses” may include museums, catering companies, or other businesses that have occupations similar to those found at hotels, convention centers, and/or eating/drinking establishments. When in doubt, the selected grantee will be encouraged to consult with WIC staff to determine whether a specific employer and/or occupation is eligible to count towards placement and/or retention outcomes. The WIC reserves the right to determine if a placement and/or retention meets the criteria of eligible employers or occupations in counting towards required outcomes.

Q V.5: Can occupations that are not specifically related to hospitality but part of the hospitality industry be counted as eligible job placements and/or retentions? For example, would a jobseeker placed in an accounting occupation with a hotel be eligible to count towards required outcomes, provided that they meet all other Eligible Employer and Occupations requirements?

Q V.6: Considering the economic focus or career interests of the jobseeker, will non-direct consumer contact positions be allowed as appropriate placements (e.g. administrative positions) as long as they are in the hospitality industry?

A V.5 and V.6: Occupations that are not specifically related to hospitality but part of the hospitality industry, such as the examples noted above, may be counted towards required outcomes at the WIC’s discretion. When in doubt, the selected grantee will be encouraged to consult with WIC staff to determine whether a specific employer and/or occupation is eligible to count towards placements and/or retention outcomes. The WIC reserves the right to determine if a placement and/or retention meets the criteria of eligible employers or occupations in counting towards required outcomes.

Q V.7: Can employers with job sites that are located outside of DC be counted as eligible towards placements and/or retentions in required outcomes?

A V.7: Yes, participants that are placed and/or retained at work sites outside of DC can be counted towards required outcomes, provided that placements and/or retentions meet other eligible employer and occupation requirements specified in this RFA. All JPP participants must be DC residents.

VI. Required Outcomes (pp. 8-9 of the RFA)

Q VI.1: On page 8 of the RFA it states both; 1) Development of a Screening and Assessment tool and 2) Development of a Recruitment & Referral Plan is eligible for up to 10% of the grant award each. What percentage of the award or performance amount per job seeker is eligible for both the placement and retention phase of the program?

Q VI.2: Of the 50% contract value remaining for reimbursement on placement and retention, what is the split? In other words, what percent of the contract value will be paid for placement, and what percent will be paid for retention?

A VI.1 and VI.2: The grantee must structure their proposal such that at least 50 percent of the total possible award (\$840,000) is contingent on successful placement and retention of jobseekers. Applicants may choose to propose that greater than 50 percent of the total possible award be performance-based, but only by proposing to receive less than the maximum total awards for other required outcomes (up to 10 percent of the total award for Development of Screening and Assessment Protocol, up to 10 percent of the total award for Development of Recruitment and Referral Plan, and up to 30 percent of the total award for Base Payments). Applicants are expected to propose a specific performance payment process and schedule in their Budget, which should correspond with an effective program structure and a strategy to place at least 200 eligible DC residents into qualifying jobs in the hospitality industry and retain no fewer than 150 eligible DC residents in qualifying jobs.

Q VI.3: What documentation is required to prove DC residency and income?

A VI.3: For purposes of determining DC residency status as a requirement of eligibility to receive JPP services, various government-issued forms of identification or correspondence will suffice, e.g., Driver's License or Non-Driver's ID, Tax Form 1040 or D-40 and W2 (most Recent Tax Year), Government Agency Letter or Printout, TANF Record, School Record, letter from a shelter or District Department of Human Services (if homeless). In limited cases, self-attestation may be utilized.

For purposes of determining current income as a requirement of eligibility to receive JPP services, acceptable documentation includes, but is not limited to: Earning Statement of Pay Stub or other employer document, Tax Form 1040 or D-40 and W2 (most Recent Tax Year), CASH TANF Benefit Statement, Alimony Statement, Unemployment Insurance Statement, Pension Statement, Veteran's Administration Award Letter, Social Security Benefit Statement, Food Stamps Award Letter, or self-attestation.

For outcomes verification purposes, an Earnings Statement of Pay Stub or other employer documents must confirm income. See page 8 of the RFA.

Q VI.4: If the applicant selected to provide JPP services currently operates a workforce program in the District that also serves jobseekers, can job placements from this other program be counted as placements under required outcomes of the JPP as well?

A VI.4: Qualifying placements and/or retentions of eligible jobseekers with eligible employers for JPP purposes can be counted towards outcomes for another workforce program, so long as the services provided under the other program are not substantially similar to the services provided under this solicitation. The WIC will work with the JPP grantee in the development of their Recruitment and Referral Plan to confirm eligible recruitment sources and specify whether certain workforce programs may be excluded for eligible placements and/or retentions under Required Outcomes. Approved plans will engage multiple stakeholders and allow for referrals of jobseekers from a variety of organizations. The JPP will not be allowed to primarily provide services to workforce programs that are operated by any one organization, including the organization that is being funded through the JPP grant, at the expense of the broader range of District workforce service providers.

Q VI.5: For purposes of required outcomes related to job retention, does a placed jobseeker that loses their job after less than six months, but is then placed in another eligible job still count as a retention?

A VI.5: Participants that are placed in a qualifying job placement and subsequently move to another qualifying job placement may be considered a successful retention after six months of cumulative employment in the hospitality industry. Note that this individual can only be counted as a placement under JPP required outcomes once, and that assisting previously placed individual with finding new employment can only count towards retention outcomes.

VIII. Review Process (pp. 10-12 of the RFA) and X. Grant Application (pp. 14-20 of the RFA)

Q VIII.1: What are the evaluation criteria that the review team will use in evaluating applications, and what are their relative weights? In Section “X. Grant Application” of the RFA (pp. 14-20), point values are listed in parentheses for some application components, but these values only add up to 75 points in total. In contrast, point values in the Evaluation Criteria table in Section “VIII. Review Process” of the RFA (pp. 14-20) add up to a total of 100 points.

A VIII.1: The evaluation criteria and review process are specified in Section “VIII. Review Process” of the RFA (pp. 10-12), and evaluation criteria that include relative weights that add up to 100 points are listed in the Evaluation Criteria table at the top of p. 11 of the RFA. This table accurately conveys the relative point values for each evaluation criteria. Point values for the “Financial and Facilities Management” (10 points) and “Budget” (15 points) evaluation criteria were inadvertently omitted from Section “X. Grant Application” of the RFA.

X. Grant Application (pp. 14-20 of the RFA)

Q X.1: On page 17, The RFA states: “Developing a screening and assessment protocol that incorporate minimum skill standards and other employment requirements identified by participating employers”. Is your expectation that an assessment instrument be created or a standardized process by which all participants will be screened and assessed?

A X.1: The WIC’s expectation is that a screening and assessment protocol be created through direct consultation with industry employers, and that this protocol would include an assessment instrument. The protocol must be used to screen and assess eligible jobseekers for referral to employers, and will define the standardized process by which screening and assessment will occur. (See VI. Required Outcomes, A. Development of Screening and Assessment Protocol on p. 8 of the RFA).

Q X.2: Is there a specific font that needs to be used in the application submission (e.g. Times New Roman, Cambria, etc.)?

A X.2: No, there is not a specific font that is required for the application submission. However, we recommend using a font that is easy for reviewers to read and meets other application guidelines (e.g. using a font no smaller than 12 point and formatted using a 1” margin – see X. Grant Application, A. Formatting Instructions & Requirements on pp. 14-15 of the RFA).

Q X.3: What is meant by “region” for the header and footer (e.g. Washington, DC, Mid-Atlantic, etc.)? [Reference to sentence found on p. 15 of the RFA under X. Grant Application, A. Formatting Instructions & Requirements that reads: “Pages should be numbered and include a header or footer identifying the applicant’s name, program model, and region;”]

A X.3: The inclusion of the terms “region” and “program model” in this sentence are typographical errors. Applicants do not need to include this information in their response.

Q X.4: Is it okay to separate sections with a typed cover sheet, or is there a preference for a tabbed divider?

A X.4: Applicants may choose to utilize a typed cover sheet, tabbed divider, or other methods that clearly identify each section and sub-section of their application. However, per the grant application instructions, a hard copy should be clipped and not stapled, and may not be submitted in a binder (see X. Grant Application, A. Formatting Instructions and Requirements on p. 14 of the RFA).

Q X.5: How many pages long can each Past Performance section be? If there are three examples, is each one limited to a page count?

A X.5: There is no page limit to the Past Performance section of the application, but please note that the full application cannot exceed 40 single spaced pages, with the exception of required attachments and budget information (see X. Grant Application, A. Formatting Instructions & Requirements on p. 15 of the RFA). Since Past Performance Forms are attachments to the grant application, any information included on these forms (up to three of which may be submitted) would not count against an applicant's page total.

Q X.6: Are letters of support or Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) allowed to be included in applications to demonstrate capacity?

A X.6: Supporting documents, such as letters of support, MOUs, or previously created screening and assessment protocols may be included in any portion of the application where they are specifically relevant to the information requested. If, for example, some program services will be provided through existing partnerships that are defined by a MOU, then the MOU may be included to support the "Program Design" response in an application. Please note that this content would count towards the application's 40 page limit. Alternately, supporting documents that relate to materials required as attachments to the RFA application, such as a letter of recommendation that would specifically correspond to a Past Performance Form, are admissible and would not count against the application's 40 page limit.

Q X.7: If your organization already has a screening and assessment protocol that is used for other programs and/or activities, can it be attached to support this application?

A X.7: Applicants may submit examples of existing screening and assessment protocols as evidence of organizational capacity and experience, but will still be expected to develop an industry-specific protocol as a deliverable under the grant.

Q X.8: Are 200 eligible job placements and 150 eligible job retentions the maximum level of outcomes that can be achieved to receive performance-related payments under this grant, or may the grantee receive performance payments for achieving higher placement and retention outcomes?

A X.8: Yes, applicants may propose a performance-related payment structure in their applications that results in the placement of more than 200 jobseekers and retention of more than 150. These figures represent minimum required outcomes that all programs should be designed to attain. Both the applicant's Program Design and Budget application sections should clearly describe when and how they will achieve required outcomes.

Q X.9: For the required Certificate of Good Standing from the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (aka. Basic Business License Clean Hands Form, attachment g.) and Certificate of Good Standing from the Office of Tax Revenue (attachment h.) attachments, is there a cutoff date on when outstanding taxes or fees and/or other supporting documentation that may be needed to satisfy either form's requirements must be provided to relevant District officials?

A X.9: Applicants must be in good standing as of the closing date of this RFA. Applicants who may be paying outstanding taxes or fees immediately prior to the application due date should consider submitting a certified clean hands form demonstrating proof of payment in order to ensure consideration of their application (see RFA Certification on p. 19 of the RFA).

Other

Q Other.1: What is meant by "participant"?

Q Other.2: What is meant in the RFA by "participating employer?" Is it one that is already listing jobs with the program, or any employer in the hospitality sector?

A Other.1 and Other.2: A "participant", as used in this RFA, is an eligible jobseeker that receives services through the JPP. For purposes of required outcomes (see VI. Required Outcomes on pp. 8-9 of the RFA), "participant" refers to jobseekers that received services from the JPP (including screening, referral, placement, retention, and other services) that result in successful job placement and/or retention.

"Participating employers" refers to employers that choose to work with the JPP in various capacities, which may include providing advice on services and interviewing jobseekers, among other activities. The JPP will need to build and maintain relationships with "participating employers" to successfully achieve required outcomes.

Q Other.3: Can the JPP recruit from the general public?

Q Other.4: If the applicant selected to provide JPP services currently operates a workforce program in the District that also serves jobseekers, can the provider recruit JPP participants from their other workforce program?

A Other.3 and Other.4: The JPP cannot recruit participants from the general public, but must instead recruit participants based on the terms of the approved Recruitment and Referral Plan. The goal of the JPP and larger Workforce Intermediary Pilot Program is to improve the alignment between a range of stakeholders connected to the hospitality industry, and make sure that jobseekers have the training and supportive services they need to find and maintain sustainable employment, while also ensuring businesses can access a pipeline of skilled workers to support growth and competitiveness. In order to facilitate improvements in the District's workforce system in the hospitality industry, the JPP will need to work with existing programs and organizations, with the intent of helping them achieve the best outcomes for their clients and obtain feedback that can facilitate improved service delivery.

The organization that receives this grant to provide JPP services may continue to operate or start operating new workforce programs that are not funded through this solicitation. In the event that such a program exists and serves DC residents, it may be eligible to be a recruitment source of JPP participants, provided that the program is aligned with the approved Recruitment and Referral Plan. However, approved plans will engage multiple stakeholders and allow for referrals of jobseekers from a variety of organizations. The JPP will not be allowed to primarily provide services to workforce programs that are operated by any one organization at the expense of the broader range of District workforce service providers.

Q Other.5: In your collaboration with potential employers, what is their sentiment toward returning citizens (those who are returning to DC residency after a period of incarceration)? Is that population a potential source of participants for JPP services?

A Other.5: While the WIC cannot characterize the sentiments of all employers, a number of employers noted a willingness to hire returning citizens. The JPP's Recruitment and Referral Plan will be expected to include a strategy for working with District government agencies and other organizations that serve returning citizens and other DC residents with barriers to employment. It is expected that the JPP's approved Screening and Assessment Protocol will account for these barriers as relevant, and assist eligible returning citizens in finding other appropriate placement opportunities or referring them to DC government agencies or other entities for assistance with employment barriers.

Q Other.6: Are applicants for this JPP grant solicitation also eligible to apply for subsequent occupational training grants funded through the WIC, or would they be excluded from consideration?

A Other.6: Applicants for this JPP RFA remain eligible to apply for anticipated occupational training grants and other grants that may be solicited as part of the Workforce Intermediary Pilot Program.