

**BIDDERS CONFERENCE, WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2017**  
**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

1. When is the proposal due?

**12:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time on Thursday, June 1, 2017. H-GAC will not accept late proposals and will make no exceptions**

2. Where do we hand deliver proposals?

**Houston-Galveston Area Council offices located at 3555 Timmons, Suite 100, Houston, Texas 77027.**

3. Can you post the certifications in a format other than an Adobe file so that we can complete them by computer?

**We want you to complete the certifications by hand with original signatures.**

4. Will you accept proposal that have a postmark date of May 26, 2017, but H-GAC receives after the noon deadline on June 1, 2017?

**Yes. If the package has a postmark date of May 26, 2017, we will accept it.**

5. Does the postmark date pertain to the United States Postal Service (USPS), Federal Express, United Parcel Service (UPS), or other delivery service?

**Postmark is for USPS regular mail.**

6. On the website (<http://h-gac.com/purchasing/rfp/ws-rfp.aspx>), it says bidders must submit: “(2) Staple or bind hard copies in the upper left hand corner”

On Page 2 of the Section 3.1 – Introduction in the RFP, it states:

“provide ten complete copies of your proposal”

Can you please advise me as how many hard copies of the proposal should be submitted?

**Section 3.1, page 2, Submitting a Proposal:**

**For printed proposals: (1) Format using a 12-point font and 1.5-line spacing, (2) Staple or bind hard copies in the upper left hand corner, and (3) provide 10 complete copies of your proposal.**

**We have updated the H-GAC website accordingly.**

7. Is there a preference for paper or electronic version of the proposal?

**No preference.**

8. Any weight given the current contractors?

**No. Experience is one of the evaluation criteria.**

9. Who reads the proposals? Will the proposals be reviewed by inside or outside reviewers? Who will be initially reviewing the proposals? Outside reviewers or board staff?

**H-GAC/Board Staff and Workforce Board Procurement Committee members**

10. When will the Workforce, Board make the final decision about contracts?

**At its meeting tentatively scheduled for July 24, 2017, the Procurement Committee will vote on recommendations to the full Board.**

**At its regularly scheduled meeting on August 1, 2017, the Workforce Board will vote to recommend contracts.**

**At its regularly scheduled meeting on August 15, 2017, the H-GAC Board of Directors, representing the region's elected officials, will vote on the Workforce Board's selections.**

**All meetings are open to the public, and we will notify bidders in advance as to the location and starting times for each meeting.**

11. Once the contracts are awarded, how long are the contracts?

**Contracts are for one-year at a time, renewable up to a total of four years, depending upon performance, availability of funds, and approval by the Workforce Board and elected officials.**

12. Is the start date October 2017 or October 2018? It says both in the application. Also, is the grant eligible for renewal for three or four years?

**The start date is October 1, 2017. We have corrected the document and posted to our websites.**

**We may renew contracts for up to three additional years, through September, 30, 2021.**

13. Even with signed assurances submitted online, are we still to hand deliver or mail the original documents?

**Yes**

14. Introduction (page 2) Submitting a Proposal - Can H-GAC confirm that mailing in only a USB or CD will meet submission requirements without a hard copy being submitted – apart from including hard copies of all required signed forms?

**Yes. We will accept electronic submissions if we receive hard copies of all required signed forms.**

15. For computer storage media submitters only need to provide a single (1) USB drive with an Adobe or Word file and not multiple USB drives? (Understand we need to provide signed paper originals of the cover page, declarations, assurances and certifications.)

**Yes. We only need one copy of your submission on a single USB drive.**

16. If a vendor is bidding on more than one scope of work, should a separate CD or USB be submitted containing the files for each scope?

**We only need one copy of your submission on a single CD or USB. If you are submitting multiple proposals, they can be on the same CD/USB.**

17. Introduction (page 2) Submitting a Proposal - Should all electronic copies of proposal documents also follow the Arial 12 pt font, 1.5-line spacing requirement?

**Yes, although we did not specify use of the Arial font.**

18. Introduction (page 2) Submitting a Proposal - Related to the question above, can H-GAC confirm that the set of signed original proposal submission documents (proposal cover page and all declarations, assurances and certifications pages) being reference are the nine Assurance and Certifications listed on page 7 of the same RFP Introduction document?

**Yes.**

19. If a vendor is bidding on more than one scope of work, is a separate set of originally signed assurances and certifications required for each bid/scope of work?

**No.**

20. If a vendor is bidding on more than one scope of work, is it acceptable to only submit audit and financial statements one time for more than one proposal?

**Yes.**

21. Introduction (page 5) Bid Requirements - Under Conditions of Bid, item #11 it states, "Contracts may be renewed each year for up to four additional years (through September 30, 2021)..." This is in conflict with the language found on 4 - performance Period, which states the renewal period is for three years through September 30, 2021. Can H-GAC confirm that the renewal period is three and not four years, ending on September 30, 2021?

**The anticipated start date is October 1, 2017.**

**We may renew contracts for up to three additional years (through September 30, 2021) depending upon an annual review of performance, availability of additional funds, and annual approval of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and H-GAC Board of Directors.**

**We have corrected the item in the request document.**

22. Introduction (page 5) Bid Requirements - "A bidder may submit three bids responding to a combination of requests." Does this mean of the eight scopes of work listed in this RFP, a bid can only respond to three of them?

**We have eliminated the limit of three bids. Proposers may submit for more than one of the divisions except:**

- **A bidder may not respond to operate both Employer Service (section 3.1) and Career Office (section 3.2)**
- **A bidder may not respond to operate both Financial Aid Payment Office (section 3.3) and Financial Aid Support Center (section 3.4)**

**We have corrected the item in the request document.**

23. The RFP states that bidders can submit 3 bids, and certain combinations are not permissible. Please clarify whether a bidder can submit for Career Centers, Financial Aid Payment, and Community/Youth Programs?

**A bidder may not respond to both the Employer Service (section 3.1) and Career Office (section 3.2)**

**A bidder may not respond to both the Financial Aid Payment Office (section 3.3) and the Financial Aid Support Center (section 3.4)**

24. For the certifications and assurances, do we bring in the originals if we submit proposal electronically?

**Yes.**

25. Are the font size and spacing requirements the same for paper and electronic submissions?

**Yes**

26. Does the RFP recognize the HUB certification for additional points?

**Please identify any business certifications (e.g. HUB, M/WBE, SDVO) in your proposal when providing Information About Your Organization.**

**H-GAC will review and evaluate proposals on:**

- **Relevant experience in managing an operation similar to that on which the organization is bidding – including qualifications of personnel the bidder offers to operate the business function, as well as business references (30 points)**
- **Approach to managing operations in Gulf Coast workforce system (40 points)**
- **Financial terms and the financial stability of the bidding organization (30 points)**

27. As a service-disabled veteran owned non-profit, are there any incentives?

**Please identify any business certifications (e.g. HUB, M/WBE, SDVO) in your proposal when providing Information About Your Organization.**

28. Can your server manage a dropbox link?

**Yes.**

### **SECTION 3.1 BID SPECIFICATIONS EMPLOYER SERVICE**

29. What is the total budget for the Employer Service contract?

**The current 2017 contract is funded at \$6.8 million. Contract for 2018 may be more or less.**

30. Are there any cell phones currently in use that come with the contract for employer services career offices?

**Yes.**

31. Can employee services proposals include new cloud based contact management programs and use them alongside your system?

**Yes.**

Or can we VPN into existing system?

**Yes.**

32. Employer Service facilities: is there a floor plan?

**No. Please refer to the RFP resource section regarding Employer Service lease information.**

33. Employer Service facilities: is there a list of all electronic assets?

**Please refer to the RFP resource section regarding computer by location.**

34. Employer Service facilities: what is the average age of electronic assets?

**Average age is five years.**

35. Employer Service facilities: what type of operating systems operate servers and client computers?

**Employer Service uses Windows compatible operating systems. Employer Service does not have a server. The Board controls the server.**

36. Is the employer service office required to be located at a board location or a contractor selected facility?

**We do not require Employer Service to have a central location at the Board offices; the contractor may select the location.**

37. How many employer service locations currently in the organization structure?

**Employer Service has a central location in Houston. Employer Service Business Consultants are in Workforce Solutions career offices throughout the 13-county Gulf Coast region.**

## SECTION 3.2 BID SPECIFICATIONS CAREER OFFICES

38. Should bidders for the career office contract include in their proposed budgets any anticipated costs associated with integrating TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff (e.g., relocations, buildouts)?

**No.**

39. Can we include staff that is not required positions?

**Yes. Please describe each additional staff position you propose and provide a job description.**

40. The career offices have leases. Do we include facility cost in our budget?

**Yes. You may assume the cost of the current lease or propose to move the office with a different cost.**

41. Do we include equipment costs in the career office budget?

**Yes. Current equipment will stay in the office.**

42. The career offices already have staff. How does did affect current staff?

**A new contractor awarded management of any part of Gulf Coast's system may choose to hire current staff. Several divisions in our system have staff paid by the state of Texas. These people will continue to work in their current positions.**

43. Per the RFP document Career Office Required Positions and Pay Ranges, are only the positions required or are the pay ranges required as well?

**Positions are required; pay ranges are suggested.**

44. If the pay ranges are required, should incumbent bidders reflect those pay ranges in the budget effective October 1, or would there be a transitional period?

**Pay ranges are suggested.**

45. There is not an Employment Counselor Job Description on line. Although there is one labeled that it is a different job description.

**We have corrected the link to include the correct job description**

46. Is the Recruiter and Staffing Specialist the same position?

**Yes.**

47. Are all recruiters employed by Workforce Solutions?

**Yes.**

48. How many 3<sup>rd</sup> party recruiters/staff coordinators are employed at Workforce Solutions offices?

**We do not employ 3<sup>rd</sup> party recruiters or coordinators.**

49. Do 3<sup>rd</sup> party recruiters/staff coordinators have access to your systems?

**We do not employ 3<sup>rd</sup> party recruiters or coordinators.**

50. Average travel for recruiters and re-employment team members?

**The average travel time for recruiters and re-employment team members is minimal. Recruiters may travel infrequently to visit employers.**

51. List of partners in each of the career offices?

**Partners in each career office may vary, but they may include:**

**Employment & Training Centers, Career and Recovery, Chinese Community Center, City of Houston Re-entry Program, Community Family Centers, Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Experience Works, Houston Housing Authority, Houston Food Bank, SEARCH, SER Jobs for Progress, Volunteers of America, Workfaith Connection, BakerRipley Aspire, San Jacinto College, United Way Thrive, Job Corps.**

52. Is the Greeter Salary accurate at \$40,000 - \$50,000 range?

**Yes.**

That is the same salary range for other positions that require a Bachelor's degree.

**The greeter position is a key position in the Workforce Solutions career offices. They must be familiar with all facets of the Workforce Solutions systems and community resources.**

53. Page 4. of Section 3.2, Career Offices lists ten part-time office sites. Does the Board want to keep these sites?

**Yes.**



54. Are they selected by contractors or the Board?

**Board.**

55. Are bidder's open to explore new options?

**Yes.**

56. Please confirm our understanding that Career Office bidders are to budget for associated lease costs as provided in the RFP. Are all current leases assumable or if someone other than current providers are selected, will new facilities need to be identified?

**Yes. You may assume the cost of the current lease or propose to move the office with a different cost.**

57. We understand the Career Offices operate as a franchise model that values standardization. At the same time, the narrative requirements ask bidders to talk about innovations. Please discuss the Board's vision about innovation. If a bidder brings a tool that adds value to services, is it expected to be shared/available to all contractors?

**All Workforce Solutions contractors participate in a Regional Management Team that meets monthly to consider operational issues for the system. We encourage contractors to suggest innovations that improve the level of customer service and better outcomes throughout the system.**

58. Can you provide more discussion or information about the regional functions and where each is housed? Specifically:

- a. Tracking Units—we understand that contractors hire Program Tracking Specialists who are either centralized or disbursed in Centers. Does the board or some other contractor also operate Program Tracking functions? If so, what is the differentiation between the two?

**Program Tracking Specialists are hired by the career office contractors.**

- b. Recruiters – do they serve a single center or the entire system?

**Recruiters serve the entire system. Recruiters may be assigned specific responsibility for job postings in one or more than one office.**

- c. Re-Employment Team – do all contractors provide staff for the re-employment team and assign them to Westheimer or are all its members employed by the contractor that operates the Westheimer office?

**Currently all re-employment team staff are Employment Service staff paid by the state of Texas. The team and the staff are managed by the contractor.**

- d. Regional Navigator Team-we do not see a position for Regional Navigators in the Career Office staffing. Are Regional Navigators employed by Career Center contractors?

**Yes, they were previously listed in the Disability Program Navigator column. We have updated the Career Office staffing document accordingly.**

- e. Regional Quality Assurance - what is the estimated amount of time Career Center staff spend performing these functions?

**Staff assigned to the regional quality assurance team spend at least 90% of time on quality assurance team activities.**

59. Can you please clarify the following about Career Offices and their locations/functions?

- a) Two locations (Hobby and Pasadena) have staff but are neither on the lease information sheet nor do they have job seeker traffic data. Please clarify their functions.
- b) Winnie shows lease information, but not staff or job seeker traffic data. Please clarify.
- c) Southeast shows lease information and job seeker traffic data but not staff. Please clarify.

**We have corrected the resource document “Career Office Staffing by Location and Position” to reflect the most current information.**

60. The RFP narrative request does not include any information about a transition, should a provider other than the incumbent be selected. If we are not the incumbent provider, should we include a transition plan as an attachment? Address it elsewhere in the narrative? Specific to transition:

- a. Is there any preference of the board of hiring or offering priority consideration for incumbent staff?

**A new contractor awarded management of any part of Gulf Coast’s system may choose to hire current staff. Several divisions in our system have staff paid by the state of Texas. These people will continue to work in their current positions.**

- b. A detailed timeline outlining transition actions related to HR, finance, IT, logistics and other considerations?

**If the bidder thinks their plan would help scorers of the proposal understand how they expect to deliver service, please include it.**

61. The Employment Counselor Job Description is not online - when you click on it, you get the Resource Specialist. Can the Employment Counselor description be provided?

**We have corrected the link to include the correct job description.**

62. 3.2 (page 7) Information About Your Organization - Can H-GAC confirm that the 11 page limit for this section does not include subpart 8 references?

**We have corrected document to 12 pages**

63. 3.2 (pages 8, 9) Information About Your Proposal - It states this section is limited to 23 pages, however items 1-14 assign 22 pages and there is no page limitations assigned for items 15 and 16. Does this mean items 15 and 16 must combined be no more than a page in length?

**We will have corrected document to 24 pages.**

64. 3.2 (page 9) Budget and Staffing - Item 1 - "Be sure that each career office location budget contains only costs for those activities and persons physically located at the site and excludes management & general/central administration costs unless." It appears this sentence is not complete. Can H-GAC provide the rest of the information to complete this sentence?

**The sentence should read: "Be sure that each career office location budget contains only costs for those activities and persons physically located at the site and excludes management & general/central administration costs."**

65. 3.2 (page 10) Audit and Financial Statements - Is only the most current audited financial statement required for this section?

**Yes.**

66. 3.2 (page 9) Budget forms - Does H-GAC want the Excel spreadsheets for budgets completed and inserted into the overall proposal document where the budget narrative will also be placed? Or should budget spreadsheets and narratives be separate from the rest of the proposal narrative and take up their own files on the USB/CD?

**Excel spreadsheets can be separate files from the Word documents.**

67. 3.2 (page 9) Budget forms - Are there individual budgets posted for each Career Office for review?

**No. We provided relevant information related to each career office for bidders to propose cost effective proposals that provides high quality effective service and outcomes.**

68. Is there a physical map of all the career center offices for review?

**Yes. [Click Here.](#)**

69. III-12 (page 1) General Budget/Marketing Expenses - Under the general budget requirements it is recommended that budget be requested for franchise marketing materials. What is the typical amount per workforce program category which is needed for franchise marketing materials?

**Franchise marketing materials are collateral for customers on various topics. Contractors will order these standardized materials as needed through an on-line store-front system. Based on the last three years, the average annual cost per office is \$3,500 per year.**

70. III-13 (page 1) Budget Line Item Definitions - Are the computers that staff currently have current? Or when are they expected to be replaced?

**Yes, computers are current. Computers are usually replaced every four to five years.**

71. Budget Templates - Management Fee - Does this apply to 'central office' activities only? Is there a cap on the management fee? Is it safe to assume that management and general costs are separate from the negotiated management fee?

**If a bidder proposes a management fee, it is included only in the management & general/central office budget. We have not established a cap for fees such as this.**

72. Budget Templates - Templates - There is a line item - "Fee." Is this associated with the management fee? Or Profit? There is a line item - "Indirect." Is this for indirect rate costs only? Or does Management fee go here?

**The line for Indirect is for any indirect costs the bidder proposes that are supported by an approved indirect cost plan.**

**The line for Fee includes any fee a bidder proposes to be paid, including a management fees and/or profit more than cost.**

73. 3.2 Budget Templates Profit - Which line item should profit be included in on the budget template? What are the performance measures associated with the pay out of Profit?

**If a bidder proposes to be paid profit, include this on the budget line item for Fee.**

**We will negotiate performance associated with the payment of any agreed upon profit, using the Board's performance measures and production requirements as a starting point.**

74. 3.2 - We can see the facility and staff costs for each center; would it be possible for H-GAC to estimate the other operational costs that are associated with the offices and/or RFP Section for the current year?

**We purposely do not provide that breakdown. We provide current costs for each division in the Resources section of the RFP. We want your most cost effective proposal that provides high quality effective service and outcomes.**

75. Is there any plan to do any expansion for the career offices?

**We encourage any bidder who wants to suggest additional location or a new location, to do so.**

76. What are historical budget amounts for each of the Career Office locations?

<b>Astrodome</b>	<b>\$ 2,648,874</b>
<b>Bay City</b>	<b>\$ 470,899</b>
<b>Baytown</b>	<b>\$ 834,162</b>
<b>Columbus</b>	<b>\$ 255,406</b>
<b>Conroe</b>	<b>\$ 1,015,737</b>
<b>Cypress Station</b>	<b>\$ 2,130,033</b>
<b>East End</b>	<b>\$ 1,178,947</b>
<b>Humble</b>	<b>\$ 1,429,258</b>
<b>Huntsville</b>	<b>\$ 261,869</b>
<b>Katy Mills</b>	<b>\$ 215,674</b>
<b>Lake Jackson</b>	<b>\$ 813,046</b>
<b>Liberty</b>	<b>\$ 459,905</b>
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>\$ 624,548</b>
<b>Northline</b>	<b>\$ 2,777,381</b>
<b>Northshore</b>	<b>\$ 897,561</b>
<b>Rosenberg</b>	<b>\$ 810,124</b>

Sealy	\$	314,583
Southeast	\$	1,610,546
Southwest	\$	1,893,822
Texas City	\$	1,233,190
Waller	\$	288,782
Westheimer	\$	2,065,277
Wharton	\$	386,123
Willowbrook	\$	636,512

77. What are the historical ITAs awarded the last two years?

**From October 2015 through September 2016 we opened 3,591 training related accounts and spent \$10,811,323. Workforce Solutions switched Financial Aid Management Systems in October 2015 and prior training account information is not readily available. We believe service levels for this period are comparable to the most recent contract.**

78. Please confirm if staffing levels per center are flexible or not.

**Yes, staffing levels are flexible. We want your most cost effective proposal that provides high quality effective service and outcomes.**

79. How will the money flow? How are the contracts structured in terms of provider payment?

**Workforce Solutions contracts operate on a cost reimbursement basis. Contractors bill H-GAC at least once per month and no more than twice per month using a format which H-GAC provides. Contractors receive reimbursement generally within 10 business days of the receipt of the billing. H-GAC may authorize contract advances or the use of cash needs projections to certain Contractors, if the legislation and the federal and/or state regulations governing the grant and/or funding stream permit their use by H-GAC and its Contractors.**

80. Please confirm participant/client related costs such as training, incentives, supportive services, etc do not need to be included in the budgets?

**Financial aid to customers is paid by the Financial Aid Payment Office and should not be included your budgets. We do not provide incentives to our customers.**

### SECTION 3.3 BID SPECIFICATIONS FINANCIAL AID PAYMENT OFFICE

81. If the Financial Aid Payment Office contractor is responsible for paying wages for work experience and other subsidized employment, is the processor expected to be the employer of record? If so, who trains supervisors and participants about expectations? Who collects all legally-required forms for employment (e.g. I-9, W-9)?

**The employer of record will remain with the contractor(s) managing the worksites. The funds will be routed through the payment office to be paid out by the employer of record. The career offices and other work experience providers are responsible for training supervisors and customers of expectations and will collect employment documentation.**

**Career office operators and other work experience providers are responsible for the management of customers engaged in work experience activities. This includes worksite development, customer placement, worksite monitoring, wage payment, and being the employer of record. Currently work experience providers request wage reimbursement from H-GAC. We intend to relocate wage reimbursement to the Financial Aid Payment Office which aligns with our payment process for other work based learning opportunities.**

**When an eligible customer expresses interest in work experience, the work experience provider will request a work based learning account be set up in the Financial Aid Management System. Once the provider receives budgetary approval, they can proceed placing the customer at the worksite. Work experience providers will submit an itemized invoice to the payment office representing wages and associated withholdings for customers each payroll period. The payment office will review the invoice for accuracy, verify customer information in the Financial Aid Management System, and make payment to the work experience provider. The payment office will include work experience wages in its semi-monthly billing to H-GAC.**

**The purpose for this change is to have more funding options and flexibility when serving customers interested in work experience activities. As a bonus, we will have better tracking of these customers.**

82. Do you specifically want to keep the Gazelle and MIP systems for tracking/making payments or can bidders propose an alternative?

**Yes.**

If keeping Gazelle/MIP, who pays for the software licenses?

**The Financial Aid Payment Office**

Should the bidder include those costs in the budget?

**Yes.**

83. Can you provide details as to how current contractors for the Financial Aid Payment Office and the Financial Aid Support Office are performing against contract standards?

**Solid performance.**

84. 3.3 (page 2) Payment Office Operations - Related to this piece of scope: "Pays wages for customers participating in supported employment services such as work experience" (page 2). Are those wages paid on a 1099 or W-2 basis?

**W-2**

85. What withholdings is the contractor responsible for?

**Applicable withholdings will be determined by the employer of records organizational tax filing status.**

86. Who is actually cutting and sending the check/payments – is it the vendor or are vendors authorizing through the workforce system?

**The Financial Aid Payment Office is responsible for submitting payment to vendors.**

Is a vendor making electronic payments or physical checks?

**Payments are made to vendors electronically. Physical checks are only used on a limited basis.**

We know TWIST is used for child care; what is the system that is used for scholarship payments?

**Gazelle/MIP tracks non-child care payments.**

87. 3.3 (page 3) - What POS system is in place at provider locations? Are these web based or physical terminals?

**Regarding child care providers location, these are physical terminals that track attendance.**

88. 3.3 (page 3) - Are TWIST payments electronic (direct deposit or ACH) to the vendor or made with physical checks?



## ACH

89. 3.3 For the Financial Aid payment office, what is the percentage of profit based on?

**The current contractor does not have profit.**

90. Are there separate performance measurements that are associated with the Financial Aid Payment office contract?

**Yes.**

91. Can you please provide average monthly funds outstanding for the financial payment contractor?

**\$11 million.**

92. What is the average funding amount to Workforce Solutions vendors from the financial payment office per month?

**\$11 million.**

93. What is the payment reimbursement timeline for the financial payment contractor?

**Child care payments are advanced weekly to meet the immediate needs of providers. Non-child care payments are reimbursed semi-monthly.**

94. Section 3.3 Financial Aid Payment Office pages 6 and 7 repeats questions 8 and 9 in both “Information about your Organization” and “Information about Your Proposal”. Should these questions be included in the “information about your proposal” as they are in Section 3.2 Career Offices?

**Include it in your response as part of Information About Your Proposal. We have updated the request document accordingly.**

95. What are the requirements for payment turn around times for participants and vendors?

**Participants: two weeks bi-weekly.  
Child care vendors: weekly.  
Training Vendors: every two weeks.**

### **SECTION 3.4 BID SPECIFICATIONS FINANCIAL AID SUPPORT OFFICE**

96. Can you provide details as to how current contractors for the Financial Aid Payment Office and the Financial Aid Support Office are performing against contract standards?

#### **Solid Performance**

97. Who assumes liability for funds spent on a participant who is ultimately determined to have not been eligible for the services received?

#### **The Financial Aid Support Office**

98. The reference document “Financial Aid Support Office Staffing Table” is coming up blank, with no information.

#### **The document is correct as posted.**

99. In the Resources Section – the Financial Aid Support Office – Staffing Facility Costs and Computers – shows Monthly Rent = “15,2760”. Can you confirm the amount?

#### **The monthly rent amount is \$14,583 (\$175,000 a year).**

### **SECTION 3.5 BID SPECIFICATIONS EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE**

100. The “Information about Your Organization” section (page 4) specifies a limit of “no more than eight pages”, but the page limits noted for each question total ten (10) pages. Will you allow up to ten pages for the “Information about Your Organization” section?

#### **Yes, you may use up to 11 pages to respond.**

101. 3.5 (page 2) Current Operations - For the Early Education and Child Care scope, can H-GAC clarify if remitting scholarship funds to providers is included in this scope of work?

#### **Yes, a contractor must plan to provide scholarships to provider staff. Please see page 3 of Section 3.5.**

102. 3.5 (page 3) Performance and Production - Can H-GAC clarify what it means under 5) Provide funds and paths for early education/child care provider staff to obtain the Child Development Associate credential and/or higher -level certifications in early education." Does this mean offering CDA classes, or, working out articulation agreements with community colleges, or something else?

**Yes, proposer may arrange to provide these and other services to improve provider educational attainment up to and including CDA and above.**

103. 3.5 (page 3) Performance and Production - Also under the performance measure #5 - are vendors expected to pay for tuition for providers to go back to school? If so, does this come out of the \$3.9M

**Yes, scholarships for provider staff area a part of the services offered under this request.**

104. In the past, maintenance of the Texas Rising Star system has been a required service of the early education and care quality contractor. We see no mention of this service in the RFP deliverables. Is this a service you wish to continue and therefore wish to be included in a proposal in response to this RFP?

**Yes.**

105. Are we looking for single or multiple Early Education and care contractors?

**We would consider multiple contractors**

106. Has the total budget available to provide services for the Early Education and Care Quality section changed based on allocation from previous years? If so, how and by how much?

**No.**

### **SECTION 3.6 BID SPECIFICATIONS COMMUNITY AND YOUTH PROJECTS**

107. Could the new Community and Youth Projects contract be awarded to more than one contractor (similar to the current career-office contracts being operated by two contractors), or is the intent to award to a single contractor? Do you want one youth provider or several youth providers to serve the Gulf Coast region?

**Yes. We will consider contracting with multiple providers.**

108. How I list my package to youth that are registered with job coaches to assist with their daily social skills without a contract?

**We are unsure what you are asking. If you are proposing to offer a vendor service to customers who are registered with us, we have a separate process for soliciting and approving vendors.**

109. On the youth, can we propose for geographic area, county (ies)?

**Yes.**

110. Will training from providers not on the approved vendor list be an allowable cost if it leads to industry-recognized credentials per RFP standards?

**Occupational skills training of any kind is only an allowable cost if the vendor providing the training is on the approved vendor list or the contractor is specifically authorized to provide the training under contract to H-GAC.**

111. For the central elements for services to youth does the vendor have to be on the approval vendor list?

**Please specify the service you propose to provide as a part of your project. Describe how you intend to make available central elements that you do not propose to provide yourself.**

112. What is considered “advanced training” as requested/required in the youth RFP?

**Advanced training is occupational skill training that results in industry-recognized credentials and/or enhanced skills or knowledge in high-skill, high-growth occupations.**

**The goal of career advanced training is to help a customer build and expand on existing skills.**

113. What is the expected pool of funds for Community and Youth Projects? What are the total funds available for the youth RFP? Ballpark range?

**We purposely do not provide that breakdown. We provide current costs for each division in the Resources section of the RFP. We want your most cost effective proposal that provides high quality effective service and outcomes.**

114. My interest is in the youth services and have been working with the focus areas of interest for over 3 years, can I use that as evidence base for my proposal?

**Yes.**

115. Who are the current providers for community and youth projects? And what has been successful/unsuccessful in the past?

**The current contractors include SER- Job for Progress, Gulf Coast Trade Center, Inc. and Dynamic Educational System, Inc.**

116. Are you looking for one provider to offer services to the entire area or are geographic divisions/segments preferred?

**We do not intend to fund only one contract for community and youth projects.**

## SECTION 3.7 BID SPECIFICATIONS STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

117. How many adult education/literacy staff will need to be served?

**For the first year, we estimate 100 to 200 adult education staff will participate in training offered through the training and development contractor.**

118. Will vocational rehabilitation staff also need to receive compliance training (in addition to adult education and workforce staff)?

**For purposes of this request, do not include vocational rehabilitation staff in estimates of total staff needing training and development.**

119. Is existing training (content in some format) available for all compliance topics?

**Yes.**

120. Will adult education staff/vocational rehabilitation staff be participating in classroom training?

**Adult education staff.**

121. Should bidders allocate a set amount of money for development of training for adult education/literacy instructors and vocational rehabilitation staff?

**No.**

Will the successful bidder be responsible for all training for adult education/vocational rehabilitation staff or only compliance training?

**Compliance Training**

122. 3.7 (page 5) Budget and Staffing - What is the budget size for current Staff Training and Development contract?

**\$843,587**

123. 3.7 (page 1) Current Operations - Will the current Training and Development content and curriculum developed under previous contracts be made available to the selected contractor for this engagement?

**Yes**

124. 3.7 (page 4) Information About Your Organization - This Staff Training and Development RFP document states the page limit is "no more than 10 pages" but

the page break down per subsection equals 11 pages. Can H-GAC confirm that 11 pages will be allowed in this section?

**We will correct to 11 pages.**

125. 3.7 (page 5) Budget and Staffing - "This portion of the RFP documents states, 'Use the Proposal Budget and Personnel forms provided in the Resources section of this request.' However, there is no Proposal Budget and Personnel form for the Staff Training and Development scope provided. Can H-GAC provide us with these documents?"

**We will provide this document.**

126. Are staff training efforts delivered to customers as well as employees of WFS?

**Staff only.**

127. Is the AE number, 1,200 staff, in addition to the current number of LMS users, currently around 1,000? If so, the total number listed on page 3 of 1,800 LMS users seems low. Are you thinking the 1,200 AE users may not need to have LMS accounts? Or does the 1,200 include all staff?

**The contractor should plan to train 100 to 200 Adult Education staff the first year and establish LMS accounts for that number.**

#### **SECTION 4 BID SPECIFICATIONS ADULT EDUCATION**

128. Do current HGAC providers plus their sub-contractors need to submit an RFP?

**Current Adult Education and Literacy contractors--Brazosport College, College of the Mainland, Harris County Department of Education, Houston Community College, Lone Star College, San Jacinto College and Wharton County Jr. College do not need to submit a proposal to serve the area currently assigned to them.**

**Other entities experienced in providing Adult Education and Literacy services may also submit a proposal under this RFP, even if the entity currently subcontracts with an Adult Education and Literacy contractor.**

129. Are there any changes with Adult Education eligibility?

**Successful bidders will be required to determine eligibility for participants according to current eligibility guidelines.**

130. What is the approximate amount available for Adult Education expansion?

**We purposely do not provide that breakdown. We provide current costs for each division in the Resources section of the RFP. We want your most cost effective proposal that provides high quality effective service and outcomes.**

131. When would current H-GAC Adult Education providers need to re-apply for funding if our contracts will expire within the 2018-2021 term?

**Current Adult Education and Literacy contractors--Brazosport College, College of the Mainland, Harris County Department of Education, Houston Community College, Lone Star College, San Jacinto College and Wharton County Jr. College – do not need to submit a proposal to serve the area currently assigned to them.**

**Contracts issued beyond this RFP will be discussed at a later date.**

132. Adult Ed: Can current subcontractors apply as subcontractor for new proposal? Would continue providing services through current AEL contract but interested in expanding to new geographies and types of services.

**Entities experienced in providing Adult Education and Literacy services may submit a proposal under this RFP, even if the entity currently subcontracts with an Adult Education and Literacy contractor.**

133. Adult Ed: Can you speak to any changes to eligibility for adult ed students and ability to serve folks not on a “work track”, i.e. parents, those ineligible to work.

**Successful bidders will be required to determine eligibility for participants according to current eligibility guidelines.**

134. Can a non-profit organization receive funding directly from HGAC and also from an existing HGAC Adult Ed provider?

**Entities experienced in providing Adult Education and Literacy services may submit a proposal under this RFP, even if the entity currently subcontracts with an Adult Education and Literacy contractor.**

## **QUESTIONS RELATED TO MULTIPLE RFP SECTIONS**

### ***Funding and Forms***

135. What is the funding available for each section of the proposal?

**We purposely do not provide that breakdown. We provide current costs for each division in the Resources section of the RFP. We want your most cost effective proposal that provides high quality effective service and outcomes.**

136. What is the current allocated budget of the Employer Services and the Career Offices?

**The two current contracts for career offices total about \$33.1 Million. One Employer Service contract is about \$6.8 Million.**

137. Is there an allowable profit percentage? What is that allowable percentage?

**A fair and reasonable profit is acceptable for commercial (for-profit) organizations. We normally do not specify a fixed limit or ceiling on profit. To establish a fair and reasonable profit, consideration will be given to the complexity of the work to be performed, the risk borne by the contractor, contractor's investment, and comparable market rates for similar work.**

138. If our organization has no conflicts of interest, is there an alternative form or statement that you would like for us to include?

**Use the form included and mark Not Applicable if you have no conflict**

139. Who are the current incumbent contractors providing systems and/or program support for these initiatives?

**Each of the divisions in the RFP has contractor/s providing the requested services:**

**Employer Service – Employment and Training Centers, Inc.**

**Career Offices – BakerRipley dba Neighbor Centers, Inc. and Interfaith of the Woodlands**

**Financial Aid Payment Office – BakerRipley dba Neighbor Centers, Inc.**

**Financial Aid Call Centers – Interfaith of the Woodlands**

**Early Education and Care- Collaborative for Children**

**Helping Young People Excel – Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc., Gulf Coast Trades Center, SER Jobs for Progress**

140. What was the amount of the award for these initiatives during the most recent period of performance?



- **Employer Service Division contact approximately \$6.8 Million**
- **Two career office contracts total approximately \$33.1 Million**
- **Financial Aid Payment office contract totals approximately \$134 Million, \$131 Million of which are pass through dollars for our customers**
- **Financial Aid Call Center \$5.5 Million**
- **Early Education and Care is about \$4 Million, approximately \$900,000 is pass through to customers**
- **Helping Young People Excel - Total contracts of approximately \$940,000**

*Performance Information*

141. Attachment V.1., Performance Measures and targets, appears to have a formula error – the data is not shown.

**We have posted an updated document.**

*Budgets and Staffing Charts*

142. Do we need a line item indirect budget?

**If you have proposed indirect costs and we accept your proposal for funding, you must provide a copy of your approved indirect cost plan.**

143. What is the allowed Administrative Expense percentage?

**For purposes of a proposal, we do not specify a percentage**

144. Should we include transition costs in the budget?

**No. We will negotiate transitions costs.**

145. Are staff incentives included in the pay scales listed in the RFP?

**No**

146. Can we include staff incentives?

**Yes. Explain how you determine the incentives.**

147. What is included in the salaries on the pay range chart (personal incentive pay, taxes, fringe)?

**Salary only.**

148. What is included in the line item for communication costs?

**Expenses for Other than IT/Networking include those for telephone, cellular phones, beepers, FAX, equipment maintenance, and other related expenses. We have added a page to the Resources section of the RFP titled III.12. Budget Line Item Definitions describing all line items.**

149. Do career offices and the Employer Service office own or lease copiers?

**Contractors lease copiers. They purchase printers, fax machines, scanners, and other small equipment. The equipment will remain at the current career office location or move to a new corporate office. New operators will arrange to transfer or enter new equipment lease agreements.**

150. The budget requests that you state if utilities, maintenance and janitorial are included in the rent. Can you share this information on the current career offices? We do not know if we need to budget for those things in already established career offices.

**We have updated the resource document “Career Office Lease and Communication Cost Information” to include rent, utilities and maintenance costs.**

151. Can you give us any guidance in figuring the cost of Resource Room Materials? I am sure this greatly varies at different career centers and we do not know the volume that would be needed.

**Contractors will order standardized materials as needed through an online store-front system. Based on the last three years, the average annual cost per office is \$3,500 per year.**

152. Can you provide information about the current volume of subsidized employment payments to participants? Number of payroll checks/direct deposit transactions issued?

**The number of customers enrolled in work experience last year varied between 35 and 259 per month, with the largest volume occurring during the summer months. Payments are normally biweekly. The largest month of system activity represents around \$250,000 in wages.**

153. Does staff have a required number of mandatory trainings to complete each year? This information would be helpful in calculating mileage and travel costs.

**Most staff will be involved in three to four online trainings and two in-person training sessions per year.**

154. Are ITA/training funds to be included in a bidder's budget?

**No. We will negotiate the level of scholarship dollars to be included in the Financial Aid Payment Office contractor's budget.**

155. Do stipends/wages for OJT/work-based-learning/paid work experience/internships need to be included in our budget? Or are those funds that will be managed through financial aid/employer services?

**Include in the Financial Aid Payment Office budget.**

156. You say communications cost are included on the facilities chart, I do not see this information.

**Please see resource document "Career Office Lease and Communication Cost Information."**

157. What is included in communications?

**Telephones, Cell Phones, Fax, Internet Access, Email Service**

158. Can you confirm you will be following full flexibility allowed by 2 CFR 200 that allows for a negotiated indirect rate?

**Yes, if such flexibility does not violate federal and/or state regulations governing the grant and/or funding stream. Normally we will negotiate an indirect cost rate for non-profit contractors who do not have an approved indirect cost rate with a cognizant agency.**

### *General Questions*

159. What are the total hours that the part time staff work weekly? Do they receive benefits?

**Part-time staff hours vary with the unit and the location in which they work. Part-time staff receive benefits when required by federal law and regulation.**

160. What are the benefits that FT staff currently receive?

**FICA, Medicare, FUTA/SUTA, Worker Compensation Insurance, Health/Dental/Vision Insurance, Disability Insurance, Life Insurance, Retirement, Leave (Annual, Sick, PTO), EAP, Tuition Reimbursement.**

161. How are RFPs funded? Is there some money funded up front once contract awarded?

**We do not provide funds prior to a contract start date.**

162. The reauthorization of the federal child care development block grant was approved by House/Senate and signed by the president in November 2014. The rules for the reauthorization were approved in November 2016. Does the workforce board know if there were any changes in the rules that impact how resources from the block grant should be used because of the new rules?

**Yes.**

163. Is an audit necessary or will a ‘review’ suffice?

**Organizations that are not sufficiently large enough to require a comprehensive audit may submit certified financial statements.**

164. Can we submit things that are ‘wish lists’ that can be eliminated by the board if they do not agree with that part of the proposal?

**We negotiate a contract from an approved proposal and may change the scope of the proposed service.**

165. I’m new to writing proposals, any suggestions to doing it?

**Be honest.**

166. Can you provide a list of bidder’s conference attendees?

**Yes. We posted the sign-in sheet online.**