



**Request for Proposals (RFP) for
Adult, Dislocated Worker and Business Services
Northern Tier Workforce Development Area
For the Period of July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026**

RFP SUMMARY: Adult and Dislocated worker programs funded under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) prepare eligible individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce by providing a comprehensive service delivery model. The key goals of these programs include empowering participants to achieve their educational and employment objectives while addressing barriers that may hinder their success. This approach may involve a combination of career services, education, training and support services to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the workplace. Additionally, engaging with business to ensure a strong connection between career and training programs is vital to ensuring participants are well prepared to meet the demands of the local job market, creating a skilled and adaptable workforce that positively contributes to the overall economic stability of the region.	
RFP Issue Date	January 12, 2024
Letter of Intent Due Date	February 7, 2024 Email to info@northerntier.org Subject line: RFP Letter of Intent
Proposal Due Date	February 21, 2024
Deadline for Questions	The deadline for questions is February 9, 2024, at 4:00 P.M. EST. Questions and/or inquiries must be submitted in writing to info@northerntier.org with subject line: RFP Questions. All questions and responses will be posted to www.northerntier.org .
Proposal Submission Process	Proposals can be submitted: Online via OneDrive: Northern Tier RFP Mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered proposals will not be accepted.
RFP Website	www.northerntier.org
RFP OFFICIAL CONTACT	Melissa Fleming, Workforce Director, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC)/Northern Tier Workforce Development Board, (570) 265-1524, fleming@northerntier.org

Table of Contents

- 1.The Opportunity 4**
 - 1.1 Summary 4
 - 1.2 Background..... 4
 - 1.3 Outcome Goals..... 6
 - 1.4 Award Terms 7
- 2.Scope of Work..... 8**
 - 2.1 Services to be Provided..... 8
 - Eligibility Adult and Dislocated Worker 9
 - Adult and Dislocated Worker Services 9
 - Rapid Response Services 11
 - Business Services 12
 - Wages and Fair Labor Standards 12
 - Participant Wage Accounting Requirements 12
 - Co-location at PA CareerLink® Sites 12
 - Service Requirements 13
 - General Requirements 14
 - Role of Northern Tier Workforce Development Board 15
 - 2.2 Performance Metrics and Contract Management 16
 - Performance Metrics 16
 - Contract Performance Monitoring 17
 - Collaboration and Course Corrections 18
 - Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS)..... 18
 - Records and Documentation..... 18
- 3.Submission Instructions 19**
 - 3.1 Proposal Content 19
 - 3.2 Submission Instructions 20
- 4.How We Choose 21**
 - 4.1 Minimum Qualifications..... 21
 - Evaluation Criteria 21
 - 4.2 Selection Process, Award, and Protest Procedures 22

Selection Schedule.....	22
Selection Award Process	22
Award Decision	23
Protest and Appeals Process	23
5.Terms and Conditions	23
Monitoring	24
Overview of Administrative Requirements.....	24

1. The Opportunity

1.1 Summary

The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB) is seeking innovative proposals for the delivery of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Business Services in the Northern Tier region.

These comprehensive programs are designed to prepare adult and dislocated workers for career success and personal growth through a combination of skill development, individualized case management, educational and work-based learning opportunities and support services. Program services should be customer-focused and based on the needs of the individual participant. Services must be designed to prepare and educate a skilled workforce that will meet the workforce needs of employers.

The NTWDB intends to secure providers that will assist the Northern Tier in reaching the following goals:

- Reach and engage adult populations that are unemployed, underemployed, dislocated from their job due to layoff or closure.
- Develop innovative strategies to assist these populations in successfully entering or re-entering the workforce in high priority and in-demand occupations through career development activities, occupational skills training and work-based learning experiences.
- Provide support services as needed to help individuals overcome barriers in preparation for the workforce and during retention phases to ensure individuals are able to retain employment.
- Connect with the business community to ensure individuals are prepared for self-sustaining employment available in the region.
- Partner with the business community to develop work-based opportunities for participants.

1.2 Background

Northern Tier Workforce Development Board Overview

The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC) is a local development district that includes community, economic and workforce development programs and serves as the fiscal agent for WIOA Title I and DHS EARN programs in the Northern Tier region. Designated as the WDB, NTRPDC has been the lead organization for workforce development planning and service delivery that meets the workforce needs of individuals and businesses. The NTWDB is responsible for oversight and implementation of workforce development initiatives in the Northern Tier region through the PA CareerLink® delivery system.

The NTWDB is comprised of private-sector business, social service, education, labor, economic development, and community-based organization representatives. The purpose of the NTWDB is to provide strategic oversight, direction, and focus to employment and training services provided to residents and businesses of the 5 counties that comprise the Northern Tier Workforce Development Area (NTWDA) which includes Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming Counties.

Stevens Amendment

The NTWDB complies with the Stevens Amendment, an appropriations provision that requires grantees of the Department of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education to disclose for a grant program the percent of the costs financed with federal funds. For the NTWDB's Stevens Amendment information, please click [here](#).

WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker Overview

The NTWDB is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents in the Northern Tier by promoting economic development and providing resources and support for workforce readiness. Under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014, resources are provided to deliver comprehensive employment and training services to adult and dislocated workers. This includes preparing our unemployed, underemployed or dislocated workers to enter or reenter the workforce at family sustaining wages.

Preparing individuals for success may be accomplished by identifying barriers and developing plans of action to overcome obstacles to employment through basic, individualized, training and support services. The ability to implement non-traditional, innovative services is needed in this highly rural area. Methods for providing service must include both virtual and in-person models including conducting outreach in underserved communities of the region.

Adult/Dislocated Worker Program Needs Statement

The NTWDB has identified a critical need to engage more participants and enhance Adult and Dislocated Worker programs in order to meet the needs of employers in the region. The Navigate Your Success campaign was developed to attract, engage and connect adults and dislocated workers to workforce resources and help them achieve long-term economic success. Additional information on Navigate Your Success can be found at <https://www.navigateyoursuccessnt.org/>.

Our current programs have demonstrated positive outcomes; yet we aim to continue and expand these programs to a more comprehensive, adaptive model focused on addressing the diverse needs of our target population and employers.

Our target population consists of eligible Adult and Dislocated worker participants who need support and resources to improve successful employment. These individuals may face barriers to employment, such as a lack of relevant skills or access to suitable training programs, transportation and adequate child care. The program must address the diverse needs of this population, providing solutions and support that encourage their success.

Our goal is to significantly improve the employability of our participants by emphasizing career pathway education and increasing work-based learning opportunities for our participants so they can successfully transition to meaningful employment. Additionally, attracting individuals to our programs to create a pipeline of workers to be matched with our businesses is needed including recruitment of those that may traditionally be overlooked such as those connected to the justice system or those with a history of substance abuse. We strive to improve employment viability through the enhancement of support systems during the retention phase of the program. In doing so, we seek to increase readiness of the participants to gain employment in careers in which they are prepared for and increase the longevity of their employment by improving retention methods.

Business Services Overview

Business relationships are critical to the success of any workforce program and are key in creating opportunities for our participants. Business services staff are responsible for establishing and fostering relationships with employers through regional initiatives including industry partnerships, business alliances and identifying solutions to address employer needs.

The Business Services Team (BST) members are charged with bridging the gap between business and workforce candidates by coordinating with partners within and outside of the PA CareerLink® system to actively recruit and refer qualified candidates, conduct business outreach and education of available services, provision of economic and workforce trend data, identify business challenges and implement cohesive service delivery plans to meet the needs of employers.

Business Services Need Statement

Businesses need assistance in finding the right candidates for their positions as well as access to resources that can provide innovative service strategies to fulfill their current and future workforce needs. Workforce challenges must be identified in order to fill the employment gaps our businesses are facing.

Our goal is to expand business engagement and provide a service delivery system that increases work-based learning opportunities that successfully meet the needs of both the participant and the employer. Work-based learning such as transitional training, on-the-job training, customized training or apprenticeship models can result in a successful transition to employment for our participants as well as offer a higher return on investment for the employer.

Placing greater emphasis on business services is needed to improve workforce outcomes. Shifting toward a more business-centric approach is needed to be flexible and responsive to emerging trends. Business Services will be provided in all five counties through the Business Services Team (BST). Selected providers are expected to designate a minimum of one staff person to participate and contribute to the overall goals of the BST. Service providers will also be expected to participate in Rapid Response Services to assist employers and workers affected by permanent or substantial layoffs or business closures.

1.3 Outcome Goals

WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance

- Placement in Employment
- Retention in Employment
- Median Average Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skills Gain

(See Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 10-16, Change 2 for reference)

NTWDB Secondary Indicators of Performance

- Increase program enrollments

- Strengthen career pathway opportunities and educate participants to advance along career pathways in high priority occupations in high demand industries in the Northern Tier
- Strengthen and improve engagement of participants during active program participation and follow up period to ensure successful retention in employment
- Increase services to populations that are traditionally overlooked such as those connected to the justice system or substance abuse.
- Increase work-based opportunities with a greater focus on OJT and apprenticeship models

1.4 Award Terms

Availability of Funds

Funding levels will be unavailable at the issuance of this RFP. Funding is contingent upon the availability of funds and State and Federal authorization in the Northern Tier Workforce Development Area. Funding is not guaranteed until the fiscal agent receives the WIOA funds. The NTWDB reserves the right to withdraw or reduce the amount of an award or to cancel any contract or agreement resulting from this procurement if adequate funding is not received from the U.S. Department of Labor via the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry or other funding sources or due to legislative changes. For proposal planning purposes, the funding levels for the 2023-2024 program year have been included below.

Program Year (PY) 2023 funding by county:

WIOA Adult Allocation	Bradford	\$86,942	
	Sullivan	\$13,173	
	Susquehanna	\$60,596	
	Tioga	\$60,596	
	Wyoming	\$42,154	
			\$263,461
WIOA Dislocated Worker Allocation	Bradford	\$314,632	
	Sullivan	\$47,672	
	Susquehanna	\$219,289	
	Tioga	\$219,289	
	Wyoming	\$152,549	
		Total	\$953,431
		Total combined funding to counties	\$1,216,892

Performance Period

This RFP will be issued for a two (2) year cycle commencing on July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026. Under this solicitation, NTWDB reserves the right to renew contractors for additional years based upon receipt of WIOA funds allocation, achievement of performance indicators, cost-effectiveness, fiscal integrity, and compliance with monitoring requirements for WIOA regulations.

Contract Award

Please be advised that the level of funding available is subject to change. All funding is contingent upon the availability of state and federal funds and the continued authorization of the WIOA activities in the NTWDA. While the successful bidder will be procured for a two-year cycle, appropriation of funds will be distributed on an annual basis.

The proposals submitted in response to this solicitation are not a legally binding document. However, the contents of the proposal of the successful bidder will become contractual obligations and failure to accept these obligations in a contractual agreement may result in the cancellation of the award. Staff will negotiate and execute contracts with the bidder approved for funding. These discussions will take place after final funding approval and may include such items as budget, cost, program design, service levels, location, target population, projections, and clarifications.

Program Cost Reimbursement

Payment related to any agreement resulting from this RFP will be made on a cost-reimbursement basis. This means your organization must have the financial capacity to pay all costs upfront. NTWDB/NTRPDC will require an invoice, proof of expenses, and required documentation to process a reimbursement. NTWDB/NTRPDC will only reimburse the provider for actual expenses incurred during the effective dates of the contract. The reimbursement timeline will be finalized during the contract negotiation. Allowable costs will be determined by all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

2. Scope of Work

The NTWDB is seeking proposals for comprehensive programs designed to serve Adult and Dislocated Worker participants eligible under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) and serving businesses as it relates to employment and training needs and connecting opportunities to participants. The selected provider will be responsible for developing and implementing a program that addresses the workforce needs of Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming County residents, with a focus on fostering innovative solutions and encouraging collaboration. The Scope of Work for this RFP outlines the services, tasks, and requirements expected of the selected provider. It is designed to be connected to the project's goals, clearly organized, and realistic in its expectations while encouraging innovation and collaboration.

2.1 Services to be Provided

Services shall be designed to support the development of evidence-based programs and other activities that enhance the choices available to adult and dislocated workers including career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, progression through career pathways, emphasis on work-based learning, opportunities for skill training and in-demand industries and occupations leading to unsubsidized employment.

The selected provider will be responsible for delivering the following services and primary tasks to ensure a comprehensive and effective workforce development program for WIOA-eligible Adult, Dislocated Worker and businesses in the Northern Tier.

Eligibility Adult

All individuals must meet general eligibility requirements and be 18 years of age and older. In addition, WIOA requires priority be given to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient and individuals who are both underemployed and low-income when providing individualized career and training services. WIOA focuses on serving individuals with barriers to employment and priority of service is required regardless of funding levels. Individuals in the targeted groups are given priority over other individuals for receipt of individualized and training services. Veterans within these groups receive priority over non-veterans. The goal is to serve a greater percentage of adults from the priority targeted groups, at least 51%.

The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board considers self-sufficiency to be a family income at 235% or above the federally established poverty levels. Individuals with a family income below 235% may be considered for training services if an established need has been determined.

Eligibility Dislocated Worker

All individuals must meet general eligibility requirements.

The term “dislocated worker” means an individual who:

- Has been terminated or laid off, or who has received a notice of termination or layoff from employment, and is eligible for or has exhausted entitlement to unemployment compensation; or has been employed for a duration sufficient to demonstrate, to appropriate entity at one-stop center, attachment to the workforce, but is not eligible for unemployment compensation due to insufficient earnings or having performed services for an employer that were not covered under a State unemployment compensation law; and is unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation
- Has been terminated or laid off, or has received a notice of termination or layoff from employment as a result of any permanent closure of, or any substantial layoff at, a plant, facility, or enterprise; is employed at a facility at which the employer has made a general announcement that such facility will close within 180 days; or for purposes of eligibility to receive services other than training services, intensive services, or supportive services, is employed at a facility at which the employer has made a general announcement that such facility will close
- Was self-employed (including employment as a farmer, a rancher, or a fisherman) but is unemployed as a result of general economic conditions in the community in which the individual resides or because of natural disasters; or
- Is a displaced homemaker or
- Is the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty who has experienced a loss of employment as a direct result of relocation to accommodate a permanent change in duty station of such member or
- Is the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty who meets the definition of displaced homemaker

Adult and Dislocated Worker Services

WIOA authorizes the following services for Adult and Dislocated Worker populations:

Basic Career Services

These services are universally accessible and made available to all individuals seeking employment and training services which include, but are not limited to:

- Eligibility determination
- Staff assisted job search and placement assistance, including career counseling
- Outreach, intake and orientation to services
- Appropriate recruitment and other business services
- Initial assessment of skill levels and support service needs
- Provision of referrals and coordination of activities with other programs and services within and outside of PA CareerLink® services.
- Provision of workforce and labor market employment statistics
- Performance information and program cost information on eligible training providers/programs
- Assistance in information regarding financial aid assistance for training and education
- Information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation

Individualized Career Services

If staff determines that individualized career services are needed for the participant to obtain or retain employment, the following services must be made available.

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs
- Development of an individual employment plan
- Group and/or individual counseling and mentoring
- Career planning (i.e. case management)
- Short-term pre-vocational services
- Internships and work experiences that are linked to careers
- Workforce preparation activities
- Financial literacy services
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.

Training Services

Training services may be provided if staff determine, after an interview, evaluation or assessment and career planning that the individual is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency without out training or upskilling. Provider staff must determine suitability for training activities as it relates to the participants assessed abilities and commitment to attend training and obtain employment related to field of study. Alignment between training program and the participant's career goals, expectations. Training services must be linked to high priority occupations for the local workforce area or in a geographic area in which the individual is willing and able to commute or relocate. Individuals must be a resident of the Northern Tier region to receive training services. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) may be written for up to \$6,000 over a two-year period.

- Occupational Skills training
- On-the-Job training
- Workplace training and Cooperative extension programs
- Private Sector training programs
- Skill upgrade and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Job Readiness training
- Adult Education and Literacy activities (offered in combination with other training services not including customized training)
- Customized training
- Incumbent Worker training
- Transitional Jobs
- Registered Apprenticeships

The NTWDB has set a regional training goal of 30% of Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds.

Follow up services

Follow up services must be provided for participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment, for up to 12 months after the first day of employment. Follow up services may include, but are not limited to; contact to determine work status; counseling regarding the workplace; additional career planning and counseling; staff assisted job search and re-placement assistance; access to additional workshops and job clubs; and referrals to support services. Follow up services must include more than an attempted contact.

Support Services

Jobseekers often face multiple barriers to employment making it difficult to attain and retain meaningful employment. The provider will work with the participant to determine barriers and make referrals as appropriate to supports offered within the program and those offered by other service agencies in the community. A referral system must be maintained or established to ensure participants have access to a variety of resources.

Program support services may only be provided after it has been determined that these services are necessary for participation authorized under WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker activities and determined that without these services, participation could be adversely affected. Support services include assistance with transportation, childcare, educational testing, uniforms or items required to for training.

Rapid Response Services

The rapid response team is to respond as quickly as possible following an announcement of a closure or layoff. Rapid response delivers services to enable dislocated workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible. An ongoing, comprehensive approach to identifying, planning and responding to layoffs and closures is needed in an effort to minimize impacts on the workers, businesses and communities. This includes attending on-site rapid response meetings. At a minimum, there must be a WIOA representative of each county assigned to the rapid response team.

Business Services

Provider staff will build a partnership with PA CareerLink®, the NTWDB and other workforce and economic development partners to effectively address the workforce needs of the regional economy. The provider will work closely with PA CareerLink® partner staff and the BST to provide a seamless integration of services.

Business Services include, but are not limited to the following:

- Connect businesses to resources and opportunities available through the PA CareerLink®, the NTWDB and other workforce initiatives in the region
- Collaborate with PA CareerLink to provide a unified business service strategy
- Develop and promote work-based learning opportunities such as On-the-Job (OJT), Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) and apprenticeship models
- Actively foster relationships with local businesses through networking events, industry partnerships and direct outreach

By implementing these strategies, the provider can contribute significantly to the regional workforce development efforts, ensuring businesses have access to the right talent and job seekers are connected to meaningful employment opportunities.

Wages and Fair Labor Standards

Individuals participating in work-based learning opportunities must be compensated in accordance with applicable laws, but not less than the higher of the rate specified in the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 or the applicable State minimum wage law and all statutory deductions, for those wages are to be deducted.

Participant Wage Accounting Requirements

The NTWDB requires all participant wages and statutory deductions for those wages to be paid directly by the program provider. Documentation of payment(s) and corresponding timesheets must be submitted to NTRPDC.

Co-location at PA CareerLink® Sites

The selected provider is required to house direct program staff at the PA CareerLink® with proposed areas for additional services allowable for consideration. Providers bidding in counties that include comprehensive PA CareerLink® sites will be required to rent space within the designated PA CareerLink® center for which services are proposed. Associated costs for one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) within these facilities are pre-determined and must be included in the proposed budget. The awarded service provider for Bradford and/or Tioga counties, at a minimum, will be required to have two (2) WIOA staff co-located at the comprehensive PA CareerLink® facilities, contributing to their fair share of costs in the operating PA CareerLink®. Bidders proposing services in counties that have affiliate sites will be expected to obtain office space to accommodate direct program staff and participants. These affiliate sites fall under the umbrella of the PA CareerLink Bradford/Sullivan comprehensive site and will be expected to coordinate efforts with the Bradford staff and PA CareerLink® Operator. A hybrid approach to service will be considered. Office locations are as follows:

Comprehensive sites:

PA CareerLink® Tioga – 56 Plaza Lane, Wellsboro, PA 16901

PA CareerLink® Bradford/Sullivan – 312 Main Street, Towanda, PA 18848

All affiliate sites fall under the Bradford/Sullivan umbrella and services must be provided to residents in Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties. Providers may bid to provide services in one or multiple designated affiliate areas.

Program year 2023-2024 FTEs

Bradford/Sullivan: cost for one FTE \$31,624

Tioga: cost for one FTE \$24,405

Service Requirements

Communication and Collaboration

- Establish and maintain open communication channels with the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board and the respective PA CareerLink® and/or affiliate sites throughout the program duration.
- Collaborate with local employers and educational institutions to facilitate relevant work experience and learning opportunities for participants.
- It is expected the service provider will collaborate with others providing workforce services in the area in order to streamline service and implement a referral system that ensure participants receive the most benefit from the resources available. This includes partners such as PA CareerLink®, workforce, economic development and education.

Performance Metrics and Continuous Improvement

- Track and report progress using quantifiable performance metrics aligned with the program's outcome goals.
- Provide regular updates, quarterly evaluations, and progress reports to the NTWDB and respective PA CareerLink® or affiliate sites.
- Submit a final report at the end of the program with recommendations for future improvements, using performance data to inform suggested changes.

Service Delivery

- Ensure the program addresses all specified program elements and incorporates evidence-based strategies that lead to improved participant outcomes.
- Coordinate and manage positive work experience initiative, including participant recruitment, eligibility determination, case management, placement, full-time supervision, worksite development, and monitoring.
- Conduct pre-testing to determine applicant suitability for the program and create an individualized plan for each participant that addresses their educational and employment goals, test results, and identified barriers to employment.

High-Level Work Plan and Performance Schedule

- Develop a high-level work plan outlining the key phases, activities, and milestones for the program.
- Provide a performance schedule that includes deliverable due dates, important dates, and key milestones related to the program's implementation and evaluation.
- Monitor and report on progress toward the completion of key milestones, making necessary adjustments as needed to ensure timely and successful program execution.

General Requirements

Legal Requirements

- Compliance with local, state, and federal regulations, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws.
- Adherence to all applicable licensing, permitting, and reporting requirements for workforce development services.
- Implementation of policies and procedures that ensure the protection of client confidentiality and privacy in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other relevant privacy laws.

Staffing and Organizational Requirements

- The staffing model should include a diverse team of professionals with experience in workforce development, including career preparation, case management, and business services
- Supervision and management of staff should ensure accountability, adherence to service standards, and continuous professional development.
- Pre-employment screening, including background checks and reference verification, must be conducted for all new hires.
- Staff training will encompass orientation, ongoing professional development, and updates on workforce development policies and best practices.
- Credentials and licensure for staff should be maintained as required by local, state, or federal regulations, or as necessary for the provision of specific services.

Data and Technology Requirements

- Provision of computer hardware and software necessary for the efficient operation of service delivery.
- Access to e-mail and internet capabilities for staff to facilitate communication, research, and resource sharing.
- Implementation of systems to assess client satisfaction, including regular surveys, feedback forms, and other customer experience measurement tools.
- Program evaluation should be conducted to measure outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and inform future service strategies.
- Records, data collection, and reporting must be maintained in compliance with local, state, and federal requirements, as well as NTWDB guidelines and performance metrics.

Financial and Compliance Requirements

- Insurance requirements must be met, including general liability, workers' compensation, and any other applicable coverage.
- Financial control procedures should be in place to ensure the appropriate use of funds, prevent fraud, and maintain financial accountability.
- Financial status reports must be submitted as requested to the NTWDB detailing expenditures, budget adjustments, and any other relevant financial information.
- Audited financial statements should be provided as requested by the NTWDB.
- All reporting required by the NTWDB will be submitted in a timely manner. Failure to do so will result in corrective action plans and technical assistance to rectify lapse in timely reporting.

Budget Requirements

- Adherence to cost standards and guidelines established by the NTWDB and relevant funding agencies.
- Identification of program funding sources, including federal, state, local, and private grants, as well as any in-kind contributions or other financial support.
- Proration of costs, as necessary, to allocate expenses fairly among multiple funding sources or partners.
- Compliance with third-party reimbursement policies, if applicable, ensuring accurate billing and payment processes.
- Incorporation of flat fees, fee-for-service revenues, and other funding mechanisms, as appropriate, to support program sustainability and cost-effectiveness.
- Submission of sub-consultant cost schedules, if applicable, detailing the expenses associated with any subcontracted services or partnerships.

Role of Northern Tier Workforce Development Board

The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board is responsible for overseeing and implementing workforce development initiatives in the Northern Tier region. This section outlines the role of the NTWDB in providing this service or program and supporting the chosen provider(s), including administrative and technical support, information access, and other responsibilities the NTWDB plans to retain for which the provider will not be responsible.

Administrative Support

- **Contract Management:** The NTWDB will manage the contractual relationship with the selected provider, ensuring compliance with all terms and conditions, monitoring performance, and processing invoices for payment.
- **Reporting and Accountability:** The NTWDB will establish performance metrics and reporting requirements to ensure the provider's alignment with the objectives of the RFP. The NTWDB will also provide oversight, conduct monitoring, and address any performance issues.

Technical Support

- **Guidance on Workforce Development Policies and Regulations:** The NTWDB will provide information and guidance on federal, state, and local workforce development policies, regulations, and best practices to help the provider navigate the complexities of the workforce system.
- **Data and Labor Market Information:** The NTWDB will provide access to relevant labor market information, workforce data, and other resources that can inform the vendor's service delivery and strategic planning.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** The NTWDB will offer training and capacity-building opportunities to enhance the vendor's ability to deliver high-quality workforce development services.

Information Access

- **Information Sharing:** The NTWDB will facilitate access to pertinent information, such as program guidelines, funding sources, and relevant stakeholders, to support the vendor's understanding of the local workforce ecosystem.
- **Communication Channels:** The NTWDB will maintain open lines of communication with the vendor such as updates on policy changes, funding opportunities, and industry trends that may impact service delivery.

Responsibilities Retained by the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board

- **Strategic Planning and Prioritization:** The NTWDB will be responsible for establishing the strategic direction of workforce development initiatives in the region, including setting priorities, identifying target industries, and allocating resources.
- **Policy Development and Advocacy:** The NTWDB will advocate for effective workforce development policies and practices, engaging in policy discussions at the federal, state, and local levels.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Building:** The NTWDB will continue to engage stakeholders across the region, fostering collaboration and partnerships to support the overall workforce development ecosystem.

The NTWDB plays a critical role in providing administrative and technical support, information access, and strategic direction to the selected provider for the provision of workforce development services. By partnering with the NTWDB, the provider will benefit from the Board's expertise, resources, and commitment to building a skilled workforce that meets the needs of the local economy.

2.2 Performance Metrics and Contract Management

Performance Metrics

The primary performance standards and related goals for the WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker programs are established through negotiations with the PA Department of Labor and Industry. Providers must meet or exceed these goals for each of the defined standards. Provider(s) must be prepared to have systems in place to track, document and report outcomes.

The negotiated performance levels for the NTWDB for PY2023 are as follows:

Performance Measures	PY 2023 Performance Level
Adult	
Employment Second Quarter after Exit	85.5%
Employment Fourth Quarter after Exit	83.0%
Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit	\$7,925
Credential Attainment Rate	68.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	51.0%
Dislocated Workers	
Employment Second Quarter after Exit	78.5%
Employment Fourth Quarter after Exit	76.0%
Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit	\$7,650
Credential Attainment Rate	80.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	60.0%

NOTE: One client potentially counts toward all indicators. Any change in negotiated measures will be immediately communicated with the provider.

For definitions of primary performance standards and more information about reporting, please read [WIOA Performance Reporting](#).

NTWDB Secondary Indicators of Performance

- Increase program enrollments
- Strengthen career pathway opportunities and educate participants to advance along career pathways in high priority occupations in high demand industries in the Northern Tier
- Strengthen and improve engagement of participants during active program participation and follow up period to ensure successful retention in employment
- Increase services to populations that are traditionally overlooked such as those connected to the justice system or substance abuse.
- Increase work-based opportunities with a greater focus on OJT and apprenticeship models

Contract Performance Monitoring

- The provider must regularly track, and monitor data related to participation and outcomes, using observations and evaluation to ensure continuous program improvement. Such efforts must be supported by strong internal systems and applications. The provider is required to provide NTWDB with timely reports and supporting documentation that clearly demonstrate program enrollment, participation, activity compliance, progress, outputs and outcomes. NTWDB will work with the provider to understand reporting requirements and program exiting procedures, and to determine the appropriate template for reporting outcomes and performance. Reporting frequency and content are subject to change at the discretion of NTWDB. Possible areas of reporting include but are not limited to:
 - Outreach activities
 - Referrals and enrollments

- Activities occurring in the PA CareerLink®
- Activities and services clients are engaged in
- Participant and employer stories; included successes and major challenges
- Barriers to employment faced by clients
- Efforts to remediate barriers to employment, including related results
- Credentials attained, including credentialing program characteristics
- Job placements and retentions
- Client wages and benefits
- Incentives issued to clients
- Business engagement efforts
- Partner referrals
- Customer satisfaction rates

Collaboration and Course Corrections

- The NTWDB will actively collaborate with the provider to address challenges and design course corrections throughout the contract's duration.
- The NTWDB may schedule regular meetings, site visits, or conference calls with the selected provider to discuss progress, challenges, and potential adjustments to the scope of work or service delivery approach.
- The selected provider is expected to be proactive in identifying challenges and proposing solutions, working closely with the NTWDB to ensure the successful implementation of the contract's goals.

Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS)

The provider will be required to utilize the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) as the information system of record for all participant and employer communication, service provision and other program activity and must ensure that all data is entered accurately and in a timely manner, adhering to all applicable data rules, regulations, and entry time requirements. Staff must be fully competent in utilizing CWDS and providing basic guidance regarding CWDS to other service providers within the NTWDA network, including querying and producing reports from CWDS regarding the Program. The NTWDB will utilize data from CWDS, as well as data collected from other sources, to determine program compliance and evaluate performance of the provider.

The provider will follow guidelines for proper use of CWDS provided by NTWDB and maintain internal protocols for uniformed and detailed case notes to ensure clear and consistent tracking and documentation of progress throughout the program. The provider will participate in data quality, validation and compliance activities required by the NTWDB, as well as regular meetings and review of performance reports, and other written reports when requested.

The provider will identify staff members whose work requires access to CWDS and submit applications for CWDS access per local protocols, subject to approval by NTWDB. Appropriate staff members to receive CWDS access include case advisors, employment specialists, job developers, and other staff members who have regular contact with participants or whose work requires monitoring and oversight of participant data maintained in CWDS. CWDS account credentials and login information may not be shared between staff members or other individuals. The provider must submit notification if any staff member with CWDS access is terminated, voluntarily or involuntarily, within 24 hours of termination.

Use of a private, secondary database must be approved by NTWDB prior to use.

Records and Documentation

The provider must retain, secure, and ensure the accuracy of all program files and records, whether related to clients, employers, or general operations, in compliance with related federal and state regulations, and NTWDB record retention requirements. The provider must allow the NTWDB and representatives of other regulatory authority's access to all records, program materials, staff and participants related to this Agreement.

The provider is responsible for maintaining and securing participant case files at all times, as well as ensuring privacy and protection of all personal information collected from participants per applicable laws, regulations and NTWDB policies. Accurate documentation showing evidence of time spent in activities and work are critical to meeting performance. Case files are the property of the NTWDB and must contain a variety of documentation including but not limited to:

- Identification and contact information
- Release of Information Form
- Assessment information and service plans
- Attendance forms, time sheets and excused absences
- Client contacts and updates
- Job search logs, time and attendance sheets
- Employment Verification Forms (EVF) and paystubs
- Verification of retention
- Other relevant forms and information

The provider will participate in regular data and document validation requests initiated by the NTWDB, responding to such requests in a timely manner, according to the deadlines defined by the NTWDB. To effectively respond to data and document validation requests by the NTWDB, the provider must have ready access to client data and documentation, and the capacity to send client data and documentation to the NTWDB electronically and securely. When transmitting client data and documentation to the NTWDB in response to such requests, the provider will utilize a secure online application, as determined by the NTWDB and follow all related privacy rules and regulations.

3. Submission Instructions

3.1 Proposal Content

To ensure a complete and comprehensive proposal, proposers must submit an application form, any additional attachments as needed, and complete all forms found in the Appendix. Incomplete proposals may be considered non-responsive and may be disqualified from the evaluation process.

- A. Northern Tier Workforce Development Board RFP Application: The main narrative of the proposal should not exceed 12 pages excluding cover letter, table of contents, and attachments.
- B. List of persons who will execute the program and manage the funded activities
- C. The Organization's latest IRS Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification)

D. Supplemental Information to Support the Program Narrative (limit 5 pages)

Proposers must submit any additional attachments as required and stated in the RFP Application, which may include organizational charts, information on staff who will be responsible for required letters of support or references, sample reports, workplans, or other documents that demonstrate the proposer's ability to effectively track and report on performance metrics.

E. Budget Form

F. Appendix Forms (Proposers must complete all forms found in the Appendix)

3.2 Submission Instructions

To ensure a fair and transparent process, all proposers must adhere to the submission guidelines outlined below. Failure to comply with these instructions may result in disqualification.

A. How to Submit

- Proposals must be submitted electronically to the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board via OneDrive [Northern Tier RFP](#)

B. Helpful Tips for Developing a Successful Proposal

- Clearly demonstrate your understanding of the scope of services and requirements outlined in the RFP.
- Provide detailed information on your organization's experience, qualifications, and capacity to deliver the required services.
- Offer innovative solutions and strategies to address the needs of the Northern Tier Workforce Development Area.
- Be concise, well-organized, and ensure your proposal is free of grammatical errors.

C. Maximum Page Counts

- The main narrative of the proposal should not exceed 12 pages, excluding cover letter, table of contents, and attachments.

D. Modifications of Submissions

- Any changes to the submitted proposal must be made in writing and submitted before the RFP deadline.
- Modifications must clearly indicate the changes made and reference the specific section(s) being modified.

E. Procedures for Submitting Questions

- Proposers may submit questions regarding the RFP via email to info@northerntier.org.
- All questions must be submitted no later than COB 2/9/2024.
- Answers to submitted questions will be compiled and shared with all proposers via email or posted on the NTRPDC website at www.northerntier.org

Adherence to these submission instructions is crucial to ensuring a fair and efficient procurement process. By carefully following these guidelines, proposers can increase their chances of submitting a successful proposal and avoid potential disqualification.

4. How We Choose

4.1 Minimum Qualifications

Eligible lead applicants include non-profit and for-profit providers, private sector entities, educational institutions, governmental agencies, community-based providers, and other entities operating in accordance with federal, state, and local law, and in business for at least three years. Applicants must be an incorporated organization. Eligible lead applicants must be in good standing with the federal government, registered in the System for Award Management, not debarred, and have proof of insurance and FIEN/EIN number. Providers currently barred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by a Federal, State, City, or County department/agency, a quasi-governmental agency, or Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB) are ineligible to apply.

Applicant Competency – All applicants must have the technical competence, knowledge and expertise, management and administrative capabilities and capacity, professional staff, financial resources and stability, and administrative and fiscal systems to carry out the work described in this RFP. Applicants must meet high standards of public service and fiduciary responsibility. NTWDB requires assurance that the selected applicant’s performance of the terms and conditions of any agreement resulting from this RFP be undertaken in accordance with the highest level of integrity and business ethics.

Evaluation Criteria

A NTWDB review team will independently evaluate each proposal. Selection will be made based on the criteria listed below. A proposal must receive a minimum total score of 65% to be considered for funding.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	% ALLOCATION
<u>Experience and Technical Competence</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrated expertise in developing and implementing programs services for Adults, Dislocated workers and business services , specifically under WIOA guidelines. (10%)• Provider’s historical success rate in serving the target population. (5%)• Relevant experience working with the target population and qualifications and expertise of key staff members and their roles in the proposed program (5%)	20%
<u>Quality of Program Design</u>	40%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive and well-structured program plan that addresses all required components (15%) • Proposal includes innovative and non-traditional service delivery methods. (15%) • Effective internal controls or processes to meet program requirements (5%) • Extent to which proposed performance exceeds performance standards (5%) 	
<p><u>Demonstrated Performance History and Ability to Meet Goals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven record of accomplishment of success in implementing similar programs. (10%) • Evidence of achieving desired outcomes, such as job placement and enrollment in skilled training programs. (5%) • Demonstrated capacity to internally monitor ongoing performance (5%) 	20%
<p><u>Costs, Budget Justification, and Leverage of Funds</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Proposal's line-item budget and/or budget narrative. (10%) • Review of the cost effectiveness of the proposed budget. (5%) • Capacity to manage and safeguard federal and state funds from fraud, waste and abuse (5%) 	20%

4.2 Selection Process, Award, and Protest Procedures

Selection Schedule (subject to change)

Schedule	
Event	Date(s)
RFP issue date	January 12, 2024
Deadline for questions	February 9, 2024
Proposals due	February 21, 2024
Anticipated contract award date	June 7, 2024
Anticipated contract execution date	July 1, 2024

Selection and Award Process

The actual amount of awards will be based on proposed budgets, availability of funds, and standards for use of public funds (all costs must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the planned functions, allowable, and allocable to the proper grant/cost categories). NTWDB is unable to define with certainty the funding allocation that will be made available for any agreement resulting from this RFP. NTWDB reserves the right to vary or change the terms of any contract executed as a result of this RFP, including funding levels, the scope of work, performance standards, and shortening or extending the contract period, as it deems necessary and in the best interests of NTWDB. The proposal most advantageous to NTWDB in terms of quality and cost will be recommended for funding.

The proposals submitted in response to this solicitation is not a legally binding document. However, the contents of the proposal of the successful bidder will become contractual obligations and failure to accept these obligations in a contractual agreement may result in the cancellation of the award. Staff will negotiate and execute contracts with the bidder approved for funding. These discussions will take place after final funding approval and may include such items as budget, cost, program design, service levels, location, target population, projections and clarifications.

Award Decision

- Following the completion of all evaluation rounds, the evaluation committee will recommend the highest-scoring proposer to the NTWDB for a contract award.
- The NTWDB reserves the right to negotiate with the selected proposer to refine the scope of work, deliverables, and contract terms.
- The award decision will be based on the best overall value, considering qualifications, proposed service delivery approach, and cost-effectiveness.

Protest and Appeals Process

This Request for Proposal contains an allowance for written appeals for disputes involving this procurement action. Appeal dispute sources may include, but are not limited to:

- Unfair competition in the decision-making process
- Illegal/improper act or violation of law

Written appeals must be made to Melissa Fleming, Workforce Director, Northern Tier Workforce Development Board. All disputes will be reviewed by the Workforce Director and LMC with written response in twenty (20) days. If appealed, the NTWDB's decision is final.

5. Terms and Conditions

Providers must follow all federal, state, local, and NTWDB laws and guidance. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Northern Tier Workforce Development Board Policy Manual (available in provided OneDrive)

- Financial Management Guide Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry
<https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Documents/Current-Directives/Financial-Management-Guide-2021.pdf>

Monitoring

NTWDB staff are responsible for reviewing all in-house and contractual operations. The primary purpose of monitoring is to evaluate program effectiveness, ensure compliance with mutually agreed goals, and to offer technical assistance and/or recommendations for corrective action to providers as deemed necessary.

All providers that receive funding will be monitored by the NTWDB Monitor periodically. The visits may include the following areas: training, fiscal, participant files, administrative records, participants' terminations (plan vs. actual), follow-up, participant responses, monitor's observations, and problem areas.

Overview of Administrative Requirements

At a minimum, all provider organizations must meet the Standards for Financial and Program Management found at 2 CFR 200 in the OMB Uniform Guidance, as well as any regulatory requirements related to the funds. Your organization's financial management system must provide for the following:

Tracking spending on multiple individual funding streams: Identification, in its accounts, of all Federal awards received and expended and the Federal programs under which they were received. Federal program and Federal award identification must include, as applicable, the CFDA title and number, Federal award identification number and year, name of the Federal Agency, and name of the pass-through entity (i.e., NTRPDC).

Fiscal reporting on an accrual basis: Accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial results of each Federal award or program in accordance with the reporting requirements set forth in 2 CFR 200.327 Financial Reporting and 200.328 Monitoring and Reporting Program Performance. If a federal awarding agency requires reporting on an accrual basis from a recipient that maintains its records on other than an accrual basis, the recipient may develop accrual data for its reports on the basis of an analysis of the documentation on hand. Similarly, a pass-through entity must not require a Provider to establish an accrual accounting system and must allow the Provider to develop accrual data for its reports based on an analysis of the documentation on hand.

Maintaining documentation supporting all spending and assets: Records that identify adequately the source and application of funds for federally funded activities. These records must contain information pertaining to Federal awards, authorizations, obligation, unobligated balances, assets, expenditures, income, and interest and be supported by source documentation.

Maintaining internal controls that ensure compliance with all funding regulations: Control over, and accountability for, all funds, property, and other assets. The non-Federal entity must adequately safeguard all assets and assure that they are used solely for authorized purposes. See § 200.303 Internal Controls.

Producing a budget to actual report: Comparison of expenditures with budget amounts for each Federal award.

Processing payments on a reimbursement basis: Written procedures to implement the requirements of § 200.305 Payment.

Budgeting and spending funds in allowable cost categories (i.e., direct, indirect, program, and admin costs) Written procedures for determining the allowability of costs in accordance with Subpart E - Cost Principles of this part and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.