



**Request for Proposals (RFP) for
Young Adult Program (LAUNCH! Your Success)
Northern Tier Workforce Development Area
For the Period of July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026**

RFP SUMMARY: The Young Adult/LAUNCH! Your Success Program aims to provide eligible youth with comprehensive training and support to enhance their career readiness. Career planning, occupational skills training, work-based learning experiences, mentoring, case management and job placement services will be offered to young adults who are disconnected, or in danger of disconnecting, from school and work. The goal is to empower participants to achieve their educational and employment goals while addressing any barriers to success.	
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
	Northern Tier Workforce Development Board Overview	
	Stevens Amendment	
	WIOA/TANF YDP Overview	
	Young Adult Program Needs Statement	
1.3	Outcome Goals.....	6
1.4	Award Terms	6
	Availability of Funds	
	Performance Period	
	Contract Award	
	Program Cost Reimbursement	
2.	Scope of Work.....	7
2.1	Services to be Provided.....	7
	Recruit and Enroll Eligible Young Adults	
	Orientation	
	Assessment	
	Individual Service Strategy (ISS)	
	Comprehensive Case Management	
	Supportive Services	
	14 WIOA Program Elements	
	Incentives	
	Work Experience	
	Wages and Fair Labor Standards	
	Participant Wage Accounting Requirements	
	Co-location at PA CareerLink® Sites	
	Service Requirements	
	General Requirements	
	Role of the Northern Tier Workforce Development Board	
2.2	Performance Metrics and Contract Management	17
	Performance Metrics	
	Contract Performance Monitoring	
	Collaboration and Course Corrections	
	Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS)	
	Records and Documentation	
3.	Submission Instructions.....	20
3.1	Proposal Content	20
3.2	Submission Instructions	200
4.	How We Choose	21
4.1	Minimum Qualifications.....	211
	Evaluation Criteria	

4.2	Selection Process, Award, and Protest Procedures	23
	Selection Schedule (subject to change)	
	Selection and Award Process	
	Award Decision	
	Protest and Appeals Process	
5.	Terms and Conditions	24
	Monitoring	
	Overview of Administrative Requirements	

1. The Opportunity

1.1 Summary

The Northern Tier Workforce Development Board (NTWDB) is seeking innovative proposals for implementing workforce programs for young adult participants (aged 14-24). Providers must focus on engaging disconnected youth or youth in danger of disconnecting from school and work.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides eligible young adults, ages 14-24, with comprehensive services that will lead them to academic and employment success. This includes the creation of career pathways and a connection to career pathways as part of a young adult's individual service strategy. Program services should be customer-focused and based on the needs of the individual customer. 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 in reaching following goals:

- Find and engage disconnected youth and youth at risk of being disconnected from school and work.
- Equip youth with the tools, knowledge and skills to successfully navigate career pathways now and in the future.
- Provide supportive services and help youth eliminate barriers to employment/career success through individualized service plans and specialized case management.
- Develop innovative, youth-centered programming, which engages and retains youth and evolves with local labor market data.
- Educate and prepare youth for placement in high priority and in-demand occupations through occupational skills training, career education/exploration and work-based learning experiences.

1.2 Background

Northern Tier Workforce Development Board Overview

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, the 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 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/TANF YDP Overview

Under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the WIOA Youth Program provides funds to states and outlying areas. States provide local workforce development areas resources to deliver comprehensive youth services that assist both out-of-school youth and in-school youth (with one or more barriers to employment) in preparing for employment and postsecondary education opportunities; attain educational and/or skills training credentials; and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities.

The WIOA Youth Program includes the following program elements: tutoring; alternative secondary school services; paid and unpaid work experiences, which include: summer and year round employment opportunities, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training; occupational skill training; education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training; leadership development opportunities; supportive services; mentoring; follow-up services; comprehensive guidance and counseling; financial literacy education; entrepreneurial skills training; services that provide labor market and employment information; and postsecondary education and training preparation activities.

The NTWDB also receives TANF Youth Develop Program (TANF YDP) funding and it is used to supplement WIOA Title I funding. All young adult participants (whether served through WIOA Title I or TANF YDP) have the same programmatic opportunities and case management available through the LAUNCH! Your Success program.

Young Adult Program Needs Statement

NTRPDC and the NTWDB are dedicated to promoting growth, advancement and increased quality of life in the region through economic development and by providing resources and support for a skilled workforce. There is a need to reach more disconnected young adults and engage them in workforce programming to successfully transition them to meaningful employment or further education.

The LAUNCH! Your Success campaign was developed to better engage and prepare young adults for the changing labor market and help them achieve long-term career and economic success. Additional information on LAUNCH! Your Success can be found [here](#).

According to labor market statistics (2022 American Community Survey), of those young adults aged 16-19 who have received a high school diploma/general equivalency and reside in the Northern Tier Region, 32% are either unemployed or not in the labor force. Similarly, of those aged 20-24 years old and residing in the Northern Tier, 22% are not in the labor force. There is a large number of young adults that could benefit from LAUNCH! programming. Our current program has demonstrated positive outcomes; yet we aim to continue and expand this program to a more comprehensive, adaptive model focused on addressing the diverse needs of our target population. We seek proposals from providers who can assist in achieving these outcomes.

1.3 Outcome Goals

WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance

- Placement in Employment/Education/Training
- Retention in Employment/Education/Training
- 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

- Enrollment of LAUNCH! participants
- Implementation of WIOA 14 required elements for all participants
- Placement into Employment/Education/Training in HPOs
- Completion of ISS goals and retention throughout Phase II (follow-up period)

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 youth 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 are included below.

Program Year (PY) 2023 funding by county:

TANF YDP Allocation	Bradford	\$32,472	
	Sullivan	\$4,920	
	Susquehanna	\$22,632	
	Tioga	\$22,632	
	Wyoming	\$15,744	
		<i>TANF YDP Total</i>	\$98,399
WIOA Youth Allocation	Bradford	\$77,823	
	Sullivan	\$11,791	
	Susquehanna	\$54,240	
	Tioga	\$54,240	
	Wyoming	\$37,733	
		<i>WIOA Total</i>	\$235,828
		Total Youth Funding	\$334,227

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 Northern Tier Workforce Development Area. 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 Northern Tier Workforce Development Board is seeking proposals for comprehensive programs designed to serve In-School Youth and Out-of-School Youth participants eligible under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Youth Development Program (TANF YDP). The selected provider(s) 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 throughout the project. 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 youth including career exploration and guidance, continued support for educational attainment, progression through career pathways, emphasis on work experience, opportunities for skill training and in-demand industries and occupations leading to

unsubsidized employment along a career pathway and/or enrollment into post-secondary education. Providers will offer services which achieve the WIOA goals:

1. Provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skill levels, and service needs of each participant, which assessment shall include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes (including interest and aptitudes for non-traditional jobs), supportive service needs, and developmental needs of such participant, for the purposes of identifying appropriate services and career pathways;
2. Develop service strategies for each participant that are directly linked to one or more of the indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii), and that shall identify “career pathways to attain career objectives.”

Recruit and Enroll Eligible Young Adults

An eligible WIOA Out-of-School Youth (OSY) is defined as an individual who is:

- Not attending any school (as defined by State law).
- Not younger than 16 or older than age 24; and
- Identified as one or more of the following:
 - A school dropout or a youth who is within the age of compulsory school attendance, but has not attended school for at least the most recent complete school year calendar quarter, and is not enrolled with the in-school provider with plans to return or remain in school
 - A recipient of a secondary school diploma who is a low-income individual and is basic skills deficient or an English language learner
 - An individual who is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system
 - A homeless individual, (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e2(6))), a homeless child or youth (as defined in section 752 (2) of the Mc Kinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 42 U.S.C. 11434a (2))),
 - A runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, a child eligible for assistance under section 477the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677) or in an out-of-home placement.
 - An individual who is pregnant or parenting
 - A youth who is an individual with a disability
 - Is low income and requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Youth meeting this condition must have one or more of the following:
 - Employment
 - Has no history of unsubsidized work
 - Has been unable to maintain unsubsidized employment with the same employer for six months or more
 - Has been actively seeking employment for at least two months but remains unemployed
 - Transportation
 - Lack of consistent and available public and/or personal transportation as identified in their Individual Service Strategy (ISS) At-Risk Youth

- Has an incarcerated or deceased parent(s)

An eligible WIOA In-School-Youth (ISY) is defined as an individual who is:

- Attending school, including secondary and post-secondary school, aged 14-21 years old, be low income and meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - Basic Skills Deficient (BSD is identified with TABE testing)
 - English language learner
 - An individual who is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system
 - A homeless individual, (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e2(6))), a homeless child or youth (as defined in section 752 (2) of the Mc Kinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 42 U.S.C. 11434a (2))),
 - A runaway, in foster care or has aged out of the foster care system, a child eligible for assistance under section 477the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677) or in an out-of-home placement.
 - An individual who is pregnant or parenting
 - A youth who is an individual with a disability
 - Is low income and requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Youth meeting this condition must have one or more of the following:
 - Employment
 - Has no history of unsubsidized work
 - Has been unable to maintain unsubsidized employment with the same employer for six months or more
 - Has been actively seeking employment for at least two months but remains unemployed
 - Transportation
 - Lack of consistent and available public and/or personal transportation as identified in their Individual Service Strategy (ISS) At-Risk Youth
 - Has an incarcerated or deceased parent(s)

An eligible TANF YDP participant must:

1. Be between the ages of 12 (or has completed the 5th grade) and 24 years at the time of enrollment.
2. Have proof of Social Security Number (SSN).
3. Have proof of identity.
4. Be a U.S. citizen or a TANF-eligible non-citizen.
5. Be a PA resident.
6. Have personal monthly gross earned income that does not exceed 235% of the FPIG.

Find more information about the TANF YDP and eligibility guidelines [here](#).

It is the responsibility of the contractor(s) to gather the appropriate documentation and complete the eligibility process in its entirety. The applicant file must be reviewed and certified as eligible prior to enrolling into the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) before participation begins. Files deemed ineligible must be retained with the provider for up to one year and referred to an appropriate service when applicable. Providers will be required to pay for any disallowed costs for files deemed ineligible after submission.

Orientation

All providers must offer a comprehensive orientation for prospective young adult participants. The orientation must include all services offered through the PA CareerLink® system as well as program-specific rules and expectations.

Assessment

WIOA requires that youth program providers complete an in-depth assessment of each youth's academic level, skill levels and service needs at the time of enrollment into a WIOA-funded program. To determine the youth's academic level, NTWDB-funded youth program providers utilize the TABE 11 & 12 reading and math testing series. TABE 11 & 12 testing is approved under the WIOA requirements and meets the Department of Labor regulations to determine basic skills deficiency and measure EFL gains under Common Measures. TABE is a National Reporting System (NRS) approved measurement tool. TABE 11 & 12 reading and math assessments measure a youth's academic proficiency levels from beginning literacy through a secondary level and high school diploma preparation. Pre-tests may determine the WIOA basic skills deficient educational function level (EFL). Post-tests measure EFL gains to count towards the Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) performance measure. TABE proctors must be certified prior to administering the assessment.

Youth program providers will be responsible for assessment testing to include basic and work readiness skills, prior work experience, barriers to employment, family situation, occupational interest and aptitudes, supportive service, and developmental needs. This information can be acquired through various testing methods, including but not limited to standardized tests, competency-based assessment tools, career strategy tools. Also, assessment instruments, especially online tools used to measure learning styles, and life skills, must conform to accepted standards and be age-appropriate for youth. Staff should have adequate training on the administration and proper use of testing protocols. Testing is at set intervals throughout program participation is required. When administering assessment tests, youth with disabilities must be provided with reasonable accommodations, as appropriate, considering guidelines associated with assessment testing; and state laws or policy. Information collected from the assessment process becomes part of the Individual Service Strategy (ISS). Assessments should be an ongoing process throughout WIOA participation to evaluate a youth's progress and measure skill goal attainment and planned performance achievement.

Individual Service Strategy (ISS)

Each youth enrolled in WIOA is required to have an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) created at the start of their program participation that includes a plan of services and activities along with an appropriate mix of the (14) required program elements, including learning objectives and employment

goals, to include non-traditional employment when appropriate, based on the initial objective assessment information. Each ISS should be developed in partnership with the youth; capture the sequence of services provided; identify clear and realistic goals along with expected timeframes; include career pathways and be flexible in adjusting/changing plans as the youth's needs and situations change. The ISS is an ongoing process, developed with the participant, and linked to one or more performance indicators.

The Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS) youth Individual Service Strategy (ISS) form captures barriers, interests, current skill sets, and employment and goal details along with planned services. This ISS document replaces any ISS form previously used for WIOA customers. Service provider case management staff will be required to create and maintain the ISS document data entry into the CWDS.

Participants enrolled in the LAUNCH! program that the provider is using TANF YDP funding for must also have the same ISS. Although an ISS form through CWDS is not available at this time, a paper version of the form must be kept in the participant file. This document covers the same information and is for the same purpose as the WIOA ISS.

Comprehensive Case Management

The case management strategy for youth should be a youth-centered approach in the delivery of services. At a minimum; the case management strategy should include: an assessment of the youth to determine basic skills, strengths, interests, prior work history, and family situation, guidance and counseling, advocacy, mentoring, identifying and providing solutions to needs and barriers as they arise, employment, education, and career counseling, maintaining consistent contact with participants as appropriate to monitor a participant's progress towards their employment goals; description of youth program elements provided; assistance in the development and attainment of realistic, measurable objectives and goals as agreed upon in the Individual Service Strategy (ISS) and follow-up contacts. LAUNCH! case management staff will be required to complete data entry of case notes into the CWDS 2.0. system. Staff should possess the skills necessary to serve as role models and establish a working relationship with the youth, providing regular contact. Case management staff should have training in trauma-informed care and provide mental and behavioral health support or refer youth to partners. Timely and accurate data entry should be a priority. Content, access and use of these notes must be kept confidential.

Supportive Services

Supportive services are based on a youth participant's individual needs and may be delivered while a participant is enrolled in one or more of the fourteen required program elements. Services may only be provided after it has been determined that said services are necessary for participation authorized under WIOA/TANF YDP activities and determined that without the services, participation could be adversely affected. Supportive services include assistance with transportation, childcare, educational testing, uniforms or other appropriate work attire and work-related tools (eyeglasses and protective eye gear), and reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities.

14 WIOA Program Elements

To support the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, entry into post-secondary education and career readiness for participants, the program shall provide or make available the fourteen (14) WIOA elements listed below:

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

Incentives

Incentive payments may be provided to participants in recognition and achievement directly tied to training activities and work experiences; and should be rewarded for the achievement of measurable performance goals as outlined in the provider proposal. Incentives may not be issued based on need. All payments must be individually documented.

Work Experience

At least 20% percent of local youth formula funds must be used for paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education, such as summer and other opportunities throughout the school year; pre-apprenticeship; on-the-job training; internships and job shadowing. Providers must develop a program design that emphasizes a career pathways approach and should include matching youth's skill levels, skill needs, and individual interests to appropriate sites. These experiences should assist the youth to obtain the personal attributes, knowledge and skills needed to obtain and retain unsubsidized employment. All sites developed must adhere to child labor law requirements for youth under the age of 18. Sites must be monitored, results documented, and significant findings reported immediately to the Program Administrator.

Wages and Fair Labor Standards

Youth participating in work experience 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. 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 in Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties. Providers may bid to provide services in one or multiple designated affiliate areas.

Service Requirements

Communication and Collaboration

- Establish and maintain open communication channels with the NTWDB 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 summer and year-round work experiences, 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, case management, and job training 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 should 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 NTWDA, detailing expenditures, budget adjustments, and any other relevant financial information.
- Audited financial statements should be provided as requested by the NTWDA.
- 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.

Administrative Support

- **Contract Management:** The NTWDB will manage the contractual relationship with the selected provider(s), 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 regular reviews, 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 provider's service delivery and strategic planning.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** The NTWDB will offer training and capacity-building opportunities to enhance the provider'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 provider's understanding of the local workforce ecosystem.
- **Communication Channels:** The NTWDB will maintain open lines of communication with the provider, providing 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 Youth program 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 (youth) are below:

Outcomes	Performance Level PY2023
Placement in employment, post-secondary education or advanced training program 2 nd quarter after exit	68%
Retention in employment, post-secondary education or advanced training program 4 th quarter after exit	67%
Median Earnings 2 nd quarter after exit	\$4,250
Credential attainment rate	66%
Measurable skills gain	58%

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

- Enrollment of LAUNCH! participants
- Implementation of WIOA 14 required elements for all participants

- Placement into Employment/Education/Training in HPOs
- Completion of ISS goals and retention throughout Phase II (follow-up period)

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 NTWDB 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 career advisors, employment specialists, job developers, supervisors 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 at [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 for any of the counties that you are applying for.
- 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 FEIN/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
<p><u>Experience and Technical Competence</u></p> <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%
<p><u>Quality of Program Design</u></p> <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%) 	40%
<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 announcement of the contract award(s)	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.