

Request For Expressions of Interest (RFEI)

COVID-19 Equitable Economic Recovery: Workforce Support

January 27, 2022

Contact: Greg Goloborodko, Sr. Workforce Development Coordinator
greg_goloborodko@co.washington.or.us

The purpose of this Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) is to solicit organizations that have interest in partnering with Washington County on near-term workforce development initiatives targeted at addressing local pandemic era workforce challenges.

Note that no funding will be awarded as a direct result of this RFEI. Select organizations that reply to this RFEI will be notified of their eligibility to submit a formal proposal during a second solicitation round. A response to this first round is required to participate in the second solicitation round.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically shifted the workforce landscape locally and the world over. In the early stages of the pandemic, many workers lost their jobs as the economy shut down. Since those early months, Washington County's unemployment rate has started to drop back toward pre-pandemic levels. Recent reports suggest that most jobs lost during the depths of the pandemic have been recovered. But these high-level data points do not tell the whole story.

The pandemic amplified inequities in the workforce ecosystem and brought to the forefront emerging and disruptive economic trends. In general, industries most acutely impacted by the pandemic were those most reliant on in-person attendance or services. Many workers in these industries, such as in the leisure and hospitality industry, lost their positions overnight. As these positions tend to have lower wages, these lost positions widened the already growing gap between those with access to opportunity and those living paycheck to paycheck.

For many industries, economic disruptions such as shifts towards e-commerce, automation, and remote work became common tools used to survive the pandemic. These disruptions have increasingly altered the what, how, and where of work. In addition, because professional level work can more easily adapt to these technology-dependent trends, the professional class of workers has been better able to weather the pandemic's negative workforce effects.

In addition to pandemic impacts, housing affordability, transportation access, childcare shortages and the houselessness crisis have dramatically disrupted the workforce ecosystem. In recognition of this challenging situation, Washington County is seeking assistance from

local organizations and education/training institutions to help support a robust response to the growing workforce challenges spurred by the pandemic.

Washington County desires to engage with multiple partners to provide workforce services intended to:

- Provide employment on-ramps, related trainings and wrap-around supports that connect residents to quality jobs, for workers displaced by the pandemic and marginalized communities including—BIPOC, women, veterans, people with disabilities, low-income and rural residents.
- Expose youth and underemployed workers to career opportunities, and provide them with foundational skills to acquire new positions, such as language courses, digital literacy, or professional development.
- Focus on industry-specific on-the-job training opportunities increase economic mobility for incumbent workers and help local industries acquire new talent.
- Expand service capacity for existing or emerging local workforce development programs through collaborative partnerships.
- Administer and manage a range of workforce service and programs on behalf of the County.

Immediate Workforce Development Assistance: Washington County's Goals

The pandemic has catalyzed dramatic shifts in the workforce ecosystem. With this American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the County seeks to provide opportunities for training, job placement and job advancement for individuals while also strengthening the local workforce system so that local companies can find the workers needed to make their businesses thrive. In general, the goals of this initiative are to:

- Provide support and assistance to individuals that have lost their jobs or have otherwise faced negative economic consequences resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strategically invest in local workforce partners to build and expand capacity in the local workforce development system.
- Create new opportunities for workers to enter or advance in their careers, including career exploration, career basics classes, retraining or “rapid training” programs, scholarships, etc.
- Develop industry-targeted training programs to address worker deficits in local industries that have either been adversely impacted by the pandemic or have dominant local industry clusters, including but not limited to leisure and hospitality, healthcare, and manufacturing.

The Two-Step Process

The County intends to use a two-step solicitation process to award funds. Step one is this RFEI—at this stage the County is seeking entities to set forth their qualifications along with their preliminary ideas about the programs they intend to propose to expand or establish with the County, consistent with the evaluation criteria set forth on page 5 of this RFEI. In the second step, the County anticipates inviting select organizations to submit more detailed proposals for evaluation and selection for funding. Responding to the first round is required to be invited to participate in the full solicitation process of round two.

Steps	Submission Requirements	Who?
Step 1: RFEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications • Preliminary program or service concept • Preliminary Budget & Performance Outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not-for-profit organizations and educational institutions with a focus on workforce development, education, and training.
Step 2: Invitation to Apply for Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed proposal to include approach, work plan, line-item budget, timeline, and ability to meet performance, compliance, and other regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations selected from RFEI list by County

Submission Requirements

Washington County recognizes that to best support workers and local businesses during this challenging time, it is essential to develop and strengthen partnerships with local community based organizations (CBOs), educational institutions, and other non-profits. These organizations are mission driven and possess the technical expertise, community relationships, and other assets that can play a prominent role in this effort.

The County seeks expressions of interest from CBOs, local non-profit organizations and educational institutions to partner with the County in this mission of bolstering the local workforce development ecosystem. In this way, the County welcomes innovative and community-grounded ideas about how to support workers.

Organizations are required to provide the following information no later than February 24, 2022, to Greg Goloborodko, Sr. Workforce Development Coordinator for Washington County (contact information below). The required information:

- Sponsoring Entity
- Contact Person: name, title, email address, phone number

- Description of the organization: mission statement, primary activities, staff overview, annual budget, the organization’s accomplishments, and commitments/achievements related to DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion).
- The organization’s qualifications that make it uniquely capable of conducting services that meet the County’s stated goals for this initiative, including descriptions of current and related services, presence in Washington County, partnerships with local agencies or institutions, demonstrated effectiveness in delivering results in Washington County’s workforce objectives, and organizational capacity to conduct proposed services.
- Description of how the organization will engage with and benefit traditionally disadvantaged communities located within Washington County—including the ability to implement culturally and linguistically relevant outreach approach with focus on services of particular interest to targeted communities.
- A summary-level description of the services that the organization would propose to provide in partnership with the County in the second round of this process. This summary should include:
 - a description of the type and scale of the services,
 - where the services will be offered,
 - who the services will target,
 - how the program will target workers in traditionally disadvantaged communities/business sectors,
 - what metrics will be employed to demonstrate program success,
 - a timeline of how rapidly these services could be implemented within the county, and;
 - how the County’s support would leverage other concurrent investments.
- A high-level budget estimate and proposed timeline should be included. Please describe the scalability of the project, in case the County’s budget constraints necessitate reduced budgets for selected programs. *Also, please note that the County requests that funded services are initiated as soon as possible—within the next several months—to best meet near-term workforce challenges. In addition, the funding source for this effort requires that the County’s funds can only cover costs incurred in the next several years. Although the County may consider extending its funding of programs past this date, if alternative funding sources become available.*

Submissions be limited to six pages in length (not including resumes and any other relevant background materials). Please submit your expression of interest via email to: greg.goloborodko@co.washington.or.us.

Evaluation Criteria

- Overall responsiveness to the County's goals related to workforce initiatives that benefit workers and businesses in the County.
- Demonstrated track record of effectively deploying and administering workforce programs—particularly in Washington County; i.e., has the organization delivered on its commitments? Has it generated a demonstrated *Return on Investment (ROI)* with public funds, particularly the funds of Washington County, if relevant?
- For organizations that are new to supporting or leading workforce efforts, a clear understanding of what it will take to deploy and administer an effective workforce program in Washington County and how partnerships will be leveraged.
- Coherence and relevance of the expression of interest considering the goals stated in this RFEI, including a realistic budget. *Note that depending on the number and quality of responses, the County may choose to scale some or all selected programs to reflect the County's budget.*
- Demonstrated success in partnering with local government and with related organizations (e.g. other non-profits) to achieve mutual objectives.
- Demonstrated organizational capacity to provide the proposed services.

Round One Selection Process

The County will convene a Review Panel consisting of County staff and, as determined necessary, outside partners to consider which proposals to recommend for the second round of this solicitation. The Review Panel will use the evaluation criteria above in forming its recommendations.

The Review Panel will serve in an advisory capacity. County staff will determine which of the organizations/proposals to "short list" for the second solicitation round. This determination will be based on the number and quality of responses to this RFEI. *Organizations which seek this funding should respond to this RFEI; they should not presume that the County will ultimately decide to solicit additional proposals from organizations that fail to respond to this RFEI.*

The "short list" of organizations will be invited to participate in the second solicitation round. The second-round solicitation will require that the organizations provide a more detailed proposal including approach, work plan, line-item budget, targeted outreach, partners, timeline, and ability to meet performance, compliance, and other local and federal regulations.

Schedule

- January 27, 2022
 - County issues RFEI
- February 10, 2022, 3:00PM
 - **Listening Session.** A virtual and non-mandatory listening session will be held to answer questions about this solicitation. To receive an invite to the session, please email the project contact: Greg Goloborodko (greg_goloborodko@co.washington.or.us).
- **February 24, 2022, 5:00 PM**
 - Deadline for Responses (Electronic submissions only). Submissions should be emailed to: Greg Goloborodko (greg_goloborodko@co.washington.or.us). A confirmation email will be sent to proposing organizations to confirm receipt.
 - All submissions will be reviewed by the Review Panel shortly after the deadline, with an announcement about Round Two eligible organizations expected in late Winter 2022.

Additional Information

- Any questions can be directed to Greg Goloborodko via email: greg_goloborodko@co.washington.or.us