

Application for Funding

- Issued by: United Workforce Development Board, Inc. (Career Link)
- Program: Drop-Out Recovery Program for Youth
- Date Issued: Monday, January 8, 2024
- Due Date: An application packet, including a PDF cover letter, a Microsoft Word Application Proposal, and a Microsoft Excel Youth Contract Budget Application, must be received at Career Link via email by not later than **5:00 PM on Wednesday, February 7, 2024**. The email must be sent to dvaughn@careerlink16.com.
- Bidder's Conference: There will not be a Bidder's Conference
- Limitations: This application process does not commit Career Link to award a contract, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal to this request, or to procure or contract for services or supplies.
- Questions: Questions should be addressed only to David Vaughn, Technical Specialist/Planner, at dvaughn@careerlink16.com.
- Evaluation and Review: Applications will be evaluated according to the criteria attached in this packet and only in accordance with the written material submitted by the applicant. A committee will rate the proposals.
- Fund Available: Up to \$200,000 per initial contract
- Contract Terms: Contracts will be entered into with successful applicants for a one-year period with options to renew the contract for two additional years, if mutually agreed to. The first year contract period will begin on July 1, 2024 and end on June 30, 2025.
- Signature: The proposal must contain a PDF copy of a cover letter with the signature of the authorized individual requesting consideration for funding.

Definitions

Applicant	An organization which is applying for funds to deliver the program described in this Application for Funding (bidder).
Career Link	Public name for the United Workforce Development Board.
Career Planner	Formally known as a Case Manager.
IWDS	The Illinois Workforce Development System is a statewide database that tracks information about each participant.
Measurable Skills Gains: Literacy/Numeracy Levels	Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) are indicators used to track important achievements of WIOA participants.
Participant/youth	A person who is officially enrolled in the Program and who meets all eligibility for participation.
Performance Standards	A set of goals established in concert with Career Link, the State of Illinois, and the federal Department of Labor.
Program Operator or Service Provider	Once an applicant has been accepted for funding, they are now identified as a Program Operator or Service Provider. Any awarded contracts will explain your responsibilities as a sub-recipient of federal funding.
Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)	The Test of Adult Basic Education is an assessment tool, which places youth in a grade level equivalent measures in reading and math. An alternative assessment would be CASAS.
United Workforce Development Board	Legal name of the organization releasing this Application for Funding. Also known as Career Link.
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)	The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is the governing legislation which controls Career Link.
Workforce Innovation Board (WIB)	The governing Board of Career Link as established by WIOA.

Statement of Work

Requesting Organization Information

The United Workforce Development Board (Career Link) administers federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity funds through the U.S. Department of Labor in an eight county region. The counties in the region are Fulton, Marshall, Mason, McLean, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford.

Background

Career Link administers a funding source designated specifically for young persons (defined as 16 to 24 years of age). A portion of these funds is set aside for persons who have dropped out of high school and have a deficiency in literacy or numeracy.

There are three basic goals for individuals enrolled in this program:

1. Increase Reading and/or Math grade levels by at least one grade level each year;
2. Obtain employment or attend post-secondary training after completion; and
3. Obtain a GED.

Statement of Need

Changes in the measurement of youth programming have resulted in a need for agencies, such as Career Link, to provide a program for youth who have dropped out of high school. Increasing the level of educational attainment is an essential ingredient in providing a quality workforce and for the economic health of the area. If feasible, Career Link intends to offer GED recovery services in each of our counties; therefore, it could be unlikely to have multiple programs in one county.

Program Design

Because the goals of the program include employment or post-secondary training, in addition to the educational component, the program must also include Career Exploration, Work Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques. Career Link is seeking an organization(s) that can deliver these three basic components in the most effective and cost efficient manner. The target goal for enrollment into the program is at least 15 students, but we will take other factors into consideration.

The sole purpose of enrolling a youth into the drop-out recovery program should not be attaining a GED. The goal of each youth should be entering post-secondary education, employment, or the military after earning a GED.

Measurable Skills Gain: Literacy/Numeracy Levels

Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) are indicators used to track important achievements of WIOA participants. A student in a GED program can earn a MSG by completing their GED or increasing a reading or math grade level. Youth are considered deficient (and therefore meet one of the tests for eligibility) if they score below a Grade Level Equivalent (GLE) of 9.0 on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or CASAS. This deficiency is defined as computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below the GLE level of 9.0. Attainment of the MSG will be determined by a post-test. The post-test must be the same type (TABE/CASAS) as the pre-test.

If an applicant scores a 12 GLE in both reading and math and therefore cannot increase their grade level, the Career Link Career Planner and the student will determine an alternative goal based on the needs of the student.

The Service Provider should work with Career Link to develop an individualized plan for when students should be post-tested. The Service Provider and the Career Link Career Planner will be responsible for determining if the youth has the potential to increase one or more educational functional levels or if the youth is at maximum capacity to increase their learning level. Career Link has the final decision regarding entry into the GED program. Achievement of educational gain must take place within one year from the date of first participation. Ideally, the youth will be able to attain their GED within one calendar year of entering the program. Preferred assessment tests include TABE 11 & 12 or CASAS. Other testing assessments must be approved by Career Link.

The purpose of the Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) indicator is to track and measure important progressions and achievements made by WIOA clients (entered in training or education), through pathways and towards various goals of their individual programs. A gain must be recorded for a client each year (July 1 – June 30) they are enrolled in training or education and progress satisfactorily in one or more areas of their employment or training program.

Testing levels will not be the sole decision maker regarding program entry. Other factors may be considered, such as the number/types of barriers the student has to overcome, etc.

The Service Provider and the Career Link Career Planner must meet to evaluate each youth's progress towards MSGs no later than six (6) months after enrollment.

Eligibility for Services

To participate in a program funded through this program, a youth must be a high school drop-out and not participating in a program at the time of enrollment such as GED preparation. Student eligibility must be completed and certified by Career Link staff before enrollment into the GED program.

Required Program Elements

1. The program must provide a mechanism for the youth to study for and take the GED examination with a goal of receiving certification. The manner in which the element is delivered is not pre-determined, but should be described in the Response Section. Service Providers are required to assist Career Link in attaining a copy of the youth's GED certificate or transcript from the Regional Office of Education.
2. The program must provide for specific gains in literacy and/or numeracy, as appropriate, based on the initial assessment with the TABE or CASAS. As described previously, the standard of achievement is for the youth to increase at least one educational functioning level in at least one area of deficiency. A post-test will be administered to determine achievement of this goal. The post-test must be the same type (TABE/CASAS) as the pre-test.
3. The program must provide information in Career Exploration, Job Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques in order to enhance the youths' ability to obtain employment or to attend post-secondary educational training. The program provider is responsible for providing adequate training and counseling to assist the youth in achieving one of these outcomes mentioned above, up to the point where the youth has been terminated from the program. Goals for attainment of benchmarks in the area will be jointly established between Career Link staff and Service Provider staff. These Work Readiness goal achievements will flow naturally from the delivery of this element.
4. The program must provide for incentives to motivate the student for achieving an increase of at least one functioning level. At a minimum, the incentive will be \$100 value and payment of the GED registration fee for obtaining the literacy/numeracy gain. If the student is required to travel more than 5.5 miles in one direction to take the test, he or she will also be reimbursed as according to Career Link's Support Service guidelines. These items should be included in the budget (see Attachment B). These incentives must be awarded in a timely manner as the students earn the incentives. Incentives must be awarded throughout the year and may not be withheld from students until completion of the program. Student incentives may not be incurred after 30 days upon attaining a GED. Maximum incentive awards per student may not exceed \$500 for the duration of the student's enrollment with Career Link.

Work Experience and On-the-Job Training

To assist the youth make the transition to meaningful employment on completion of the academic portion of the program, the program provider is encouraged to develop relationships with local employers who will either hire, interview, provide an on-the-job training opportunity or provide work experience with an option to hire. The Service

Provider should assist and make recommendations for worksites that fit the needs of the student. Describe who the employer(s) is/are, location, job types, full or part-time or both and typical salary range. Will the involvement be interviewing, hiring, on-the-job training or work experience with an option to hire? How will the youth be linked with the employer? Will the work component take place during the school year or summertime?

If Work Experience is selected, Career Link will establish a contractual agreement with the employer at the request of the program provider. Career Link will pay the youth the current Illinois minimum wage or up to \$5.00 above the minimum wage, depending on the prevailing entry-level wage for the work site. Work Experience may continue up to 1,800 hours, or up to eighteen (18) months duration, whichever occurs first. The number of available Work Experience slots and/or OJT slots will be determined when Service Provider budgets are finalized.

It is expected that 50 percent of the students sponsored by Career Link will participate in a Work Experience opportunity. The 50 percent rate may be adjusted depending on Career Link's Youth allocation, and the employment status of youth entering the program.

On-the-Job Training (OJT) requires the employer to hire the youth. If OJT is selected, Career Link will establish a contractual agreement to reimburse the employer up to 75% of the base wage for a customized training period. Career Link will be responsible for developing any on-the-job training contracts. Estimated costs associated with on-the-job training should be included in the proposal, but will not be part of the contract. These costs will be paid directly by Career Link.

Note: Employment during program participation is encouraged as long as it does not interfere with adequate progress toward Program Elements One and Two, outlined above.

Optional Element – ICAPS

The inclusion of Integrated Career and Academic Preparation Systems (ICAPS) into your program is highly desirable. ICAPS programs should be considered high-growth so as to prepare students for demand occupations. Tuition, Fees, Books, and Material costs for ICAPS should be included as a separate line item in the budget. Enrollment in ICAPS training must be approved by Career Link prior to enrollment.

General Parameters and Requirements

The Service Provider will be responsible for making an initial identification of appropriate students. Career Link staff will assess individuals referred by the Service Provider and will administer the TABE/CASAS to determine literacy/numeracy deficiencies. (In some cases, the Service Provider may wish to administer the TABE/CASAS.) The Career Link staff will examine the barriers and suitability of the individual to successfully participate in the drop-out recovery program as well as meeting the general eligibility requirements.

Additional information will be provided to the Service Provider to assist them in making the initial identification.

Due to the roles of the Service Provider and Career Link staff, communication and cooperation will be very critical to the success of the program. On-going and frequent communication will be required. Service Providers will be required to submit quarterly estimates of their expenditures and planned enrollments to Career Link.

Each youth must have a follow-up period of one year. It is largely the responsibility of the subcontractor to perform follow-up on students in partnership with a Career Link Transition Services Provider. Career Link will also provide guidance in this element of the program. A full-year of follow-up should be planned for all enrolled students after their exit from the program. At the completion of training by the Service Provider, a mandatory meeting will take place with the staff of Career Link to review the results of the training and the move to the next phase, be it work, post-secondary training, job search, etc.

Career Link cannot pay for any service or activity that is already provided by another organization as long as that service is reasonably available to Career Link clients. Any activity that is reimbursed by Career Link must be ***new, additional, or unique***. Combining instruction to Career Link youth with non-Career Link students is discouraged due to the problems created in segregating costs.

The Service Provider will be monitored for compliance with the terms of the contract by Career Link and possibly monitors from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Some supportive services will be available to the youth, such as childcare, transportation allowance, and emergency needs. These supportive services will be arranged and paid for directly by Career Link unless other arrangement are established with the Service Provider.

Performance Outcomes

The applicant will be required to specify an expected minimum performance level that meets or exceeds the following standards:

1. Success rate for obtaining the GED – 72%
2. Success rate for attaining a measureable skills gain – 55%
3. Success rate for employment or post-secondary educational training – 76%

Performance level percentages may change depending on annual negotiations with the State. The above goals are suggestive of what it is believed are achievable minimum goals. Experience may determine that these goals are either too low or too high. A youth may be terminated from the program even if only one goal is met or if no further progress is thought possible. The overall goal, however, is for the youth to achieve all three goals.

Post Program Activities

Upon successful completion of drop-out recovery activities, students may choose to pursue post-secondary training or on-the-job opportunities through Career Link. Interested students should discuss these options with their Career Link Career Planner so funds may be set aside by Career Link. No tuition or on-the-job training assistance can be paid without prior approval. On-the-job training reimburses employers that hire eligible youth up to 75% of the base wage for a customized training period. Career Link will be responsible for developing any on-the-job training contracts. Costs associated with these activities are not part of the Service Provider's budget or contract. These costs will be paid directly by Career Link.

Application

Application Format and Submission Requirements

Applicants must submit:

- 1) a PDF of a signed Cover Letter,
- 2) an Application Proposal in Microsoft Word, and
- 3) the Youth Contract Budget Application in Microsoft Excel.

The Application Proposal must address the Required Program Elements identified in this RFP and, if applicable, the Optional Element. The Proposal should also address the concerns listed in the Ratings Guide (Attachment A).

The Youth Contract Budget Application (Attachment B) is available to download at www.CareerLinkIL.com/contact/rfp.

Funding

The applicant may request funds for expenses that are necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the program under the guidelines of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. No funds may be used to duplicate or provide services that are already available and currently provided.

Initial contract awards are limited to \$200,000; however, budget increases and adjustments may occur during the contract if Career Link determines it is necessary and reasonable.

Allowable expenses could include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Instructional staff salaries and fringe benefits (preparatory time can be reimbursed)
2. Supplies, instructional materials
3. Travel
4. Facility rental
5. Student Incentives
6. Student travel
7. Conference costs if appropriate and connected with this program

The applicant cannot purchase equipment without permission from Career Link. Such purchases are generally discouraged.

Any contract between Career Link and the applicant will be a cost reimbursement type wherein the applicant will be reimbursed monthly on the submission of a bill, detailing the costs incurred during the preceding month, which are properly chargeable to the contract.

General Provisions

Each sub-recipient/sub-contractor will be monitored at least once a year to assure that the program is being delivered in accordance with the terms of this RFP and the subsequent contract.

Invoices must be submitted monthly and in a timely manner. Failure to invoice on time may result in the issuance of a corrective action request and ultimately with the cancellation of the contract.

Sub-recipients/ sub-contractors must have:

- a financial management system in place to track and record grant expenditures (i.e., QuickBooks, Sage MIP);
- oversight provided by a Board;
- registered at Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) and System for Award Management (SAM) websites, and;
- not been debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in federal assistance programs or activities.

Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination

The Service Provider must abide by the following policies which promote fair hiring, promotion and recruiting practices in all job classifications in order to achieve equality in employment by complying with the non-discrimination and non-sectarian activities and provision under Section 188 of the Workforce Investment Act, as well as abide by the following federal/state laws and regulations for EO/Non-discrimination:

Executive Order 11246;

Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended;

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975;

Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended;

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended;

U.S. Department of Labor Regulations at 29 CFR Part 37;

The Illinois Human Rights Act, as amended;

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;

The Equal Pay Act of 1963;

The affirmative action provisions of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistant Act of 1974;

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and

The anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Review Process

The Local Workforce Innovation Board has authorized Career Link to release this Request for Proposal, score the resulting proposals according to the criteria attached and, based on those scores, provide the Board with recommendations for awarding contracts. The Board will approve any contracts awarded. Contract(s) will be offered to the applicants in order of rating, taking into consideration the availability of funds and the goal to provide GED recovery services in each of our counties.

Response Items

1. Cover Letter

Provide a cover letter, signed by the person in your organization who has the authority to bind the organization to a contract. In the letter, state that the organization is submitting an Application, and will be able to enter into a contract if so selected. This signed cover letter must be sent as a PDF document.

2. Application Proposal

The ability of the review committee to understand clearly what the applicant intends to provide will be a key factor in awarding funds for this project. *All responses must be typed.*

The Application Proposal must be sent in one Microsoft Word document. The Proposal should include responses to the criteria listed below, numbered to match the order of the Applicant Information and Required Application Elements. Use as much space as necessary for each item, keeping the items in the same order and clearly numbering the heading for each item.

Applicant Information

1. Name, Address, Telephone Number, FEIN and DUNS of applicant
2. Name and title of highest ranking staff in your organization
3. Contact Person (if different than 2.) including name, telephone number and email address
4. Identify the financial management system in place to track and record grant expenditures (i.e., QuickBooks, Sage MIP).
5. Brief history of your organization, its mission, accomplishments, staffing, and similar information.

Required Application Elements

Describe how *each* required element will be delivered in your Application Proposal.

1. Who will provide the program element?
2. Where will the element be provided? Also, describe the specific geographic area your organization serves.
3. Discuss the timelines for each element. Will they be open entry - open exit; set entry - open exit; set entry – set exit?
4. How long is each element anticipated to take?
5. Maximum number of students per group or in the class? Will you do more than one group in a yearly cycle? If so, how many?
6. Number of instructors or other staff, and the percentage of time each instructor or staff will be completing Career Link program activities.
7. Non-Duplication: Describe and explain how the reimbursable elements in your proposal do not duplicate existing programs.
8. Describe a weekly schedule including meeting hours and days of the week.
9. Describe the topical areas that will be covered in each of the elements.
10. Identify any specific types of instructional materials that will be used.
11. Describe the provision of Career Exploration, Job Readiness Skills, and Job Search Techniques.
12. Will the bidder be able to make payments directly to the students for incentives and mileage?
13. Describe the Work Experience component including who the employer(s) is/are, location, job types, full- or part-time or both and typical salary range. Will the involvement be hiring, interviewing, on-the-job training, or work experience with an option to hire? How will the youth be linked with the employer?
14. Describe the strategy and techniques that will be used to transition the student to work or post-secondary training.
15. Optional Component: describe how the program design includes ICAPS training and the types of training available to students.
16. Communication: Provide an assurance that Service Provider staff will be available for communication with the staff of Career Link and the importance of this communication.

17. Follow-up: Provide an assurance that the Service Provider understands the responsibility for the follow-up activity and the requirement to provide any known information on the status of the youths following completion of the program. It is largely the responsibility of the subcontractor to perform follow-up on students in partnership with Career Link's Transition Services subcontractor(s). A full-year of follow-up should be planned for all enrolled students. At the completion of training by the Service Provider, a mandatory meeting will take place with the staff of Career Link to review the results of the training and the move to the next phase, be it work, post-secondary training, job search, etc.
18. Recruitment: Describe the procedure and approach that will be taken to identify and obtain participation. Describe your understanding of the qualifiers for participation. Provide an assurance that it is understood that selection will require the determination of eligibility and suitability by Career Link staff before services can be delivered.
19. Staffing: Describe the number and types of individuals who will be charged to the project. Describe whether these positions are new or re-assignment of existing staff. Describe the qualifications and experience of existing staff or qualifications for hiring new staff.
20. Provide an explanation of the proposed budget (calculated in the Youth Contract Budget Application. If any costs are shared costs, indicate the basis of how the Career Link share will be determined.
21. Provide an Assurance of compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity laws, and assurance that your assigned program staff will complete annual sexual harassment training during the contract period.
22. Provide any additional information that you believe is relevant.

3. Budget

Download the Youth Contract Budget Application (Attachment B) at www.CareerLinkIL.com/contact/rfp. Complete the Youth Contract Budget Application, describing all costs chargeable to the program (salary, fringe benefits, facility rent, etc.). Awards will be dependent on total funding available. Proposals up to \$200,000 will be accepted; however, the raters will be considering the cost effectiveness of each proposal in order to provide services throughout the region.

Appendix

Proposal Rating Guide

Drop-Out Recovery for Youth Program – 2024

Bidder _____

CRITERIA	Possible Points	Points Assigned
1. To what degree does the applicant describe an organization capable of providing the requested program including adequate staff?	5	
2. To what degree has the applicant described a program that matches the requested requirements listed in the Application for Funding document and described a program, approach and structure which promises success in meeting the goals of the program?	30	
3. Has the applicant added the optional component (ICAPS training)?	5	
4. Is there an adequate explanation of the funding level requested and is the funding request cost effective in comparison with the time allocated for the project?	15	
5. Does the applicant provide a comprehensive Incentive Plan designed to motivate the students to success?	10	
6. Does the applicant have experience in successfully administering similar WIOA programs?	0 or 5	
7. Has the applicant provided the necessary Equal Opportunity assurances?	0 or 5	
8. Is the applicant organization owned by a female or minority?	0 or 5	
TOTAL	80	

Rater _____

Date _____