

Request for Proposals

Issued by: United Workforce Development Board, Inc. (Career Link)

Program: Integrated Career Readiness Services

Date Issued: Friday, March 13, 2026

- Application Deadlines:**
1. Submit a Letter of Intent to Apply via email to David Vaughn at dvaughn@careerlink16.com by no later than 5:00PM on Friday, April 3, 2026.
 2. Submit all application materials via email to David Vaughn at dvaughn@careerlink16.com by no later than 5:00PM on Friday, April 24, 2026.

Bidders' Conference: There will not be a Bidders' 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.

Funds Available: Up to \$250,000 per initial contract.

Contract Terms: Contracts will be entered into with successful bidders for a one-year period with options to renew the contract for two additional years. See additional explanation in the body of this RFP.

Signature: The proposal must contain a cover letter with the signature of the authorized individual requesting consideration for funding provided by Adobe PDF email.

Project Summary

Career Link is seeking qualified Service Provider(s) to deliver a pilot program of Integrated Career Readiness Services for WIOA Tuition Assistance participants. The purpose of this pilot is to test, evaluate, and refine service delivery approaches that ensure participants are fully prepared for training, supported throughout participation, and positioned to successfully transition into unsubsidized employment in high-demand occupations.

The pilot program is structured around three interrelated components and will be delivered on a continuous, year-round basis for both individual participants and groups. Services may be provided in person, virtually, or through a hybrid format to ensure timely access and responsiveness to participant needs. As a pilot, Career Link reserves the right to adjust program design, service expectations, or performance measures during the contract period to improve outcomes and ensure compliance with evolving guidance.

1. **Pre-Training Barrier Identification and Career Readiness:** Assist participants in addressing barriers to training, support implementation of their IEP, and provide guidance to ensure training readiness.
2. **Employability Skills Development (During Training):** Provide instruction in job readiness, essential workplace skills, resume and interview preparation, digital literacy, and industry awareness. Optional social-emotional support may be provided by a Social Worker.
3. **Job Search, Placement, and Retention Services (Final Months of Training and Post-Training):** Support participants with job search, applications, employer outreach, placement, and early employment retention to ensure long-term success.

This pilot initiative is intended to strengthen workforce readiness, promote equitable access to high-growth occupations, and align participant skills with regional employer demand, while providing actionable insights to refine service delivery for future program years.

Key Details:	
Release RFP	Friday, March 13, 2026
Proposal Due Date	Friday, April 24, 2026
Maximum Contract Amount	Up to \$250,000
Contract Period	July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027, with option to renew for two additional 12-month periods.

Please refer to the attached Request for Proposals for full requirements and instructions.

Table of Contents

Project Summary.....	2
Definitions.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Requesting Organization Information	5
Background.....	5
Statement of Need.....	6
Program Requirements	7
Program Design	7
Performance Outcomes.....	13
Funding & Administrative Requirements	14
Funding	14
General Provisions.....	14
Application Instructions.....	17
Letter of Intent to Apply (PDF)	17
Proposal Submission Requirements.....	18
Cover Letter (PDF).....	18
Proposal (Word)	19
Contract Budget Application (Excel)	20
Submission Checklist	21
Proposal Review Process	22
Appendix	23
Proposal Rating Guide.....	24

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.
Certified / Certification Date	The date recorded in the statewide IWDS system that signifies that the customer has met all eligibility requirements for a particular Title of funding. The customer's file is certified and Service lines are opened.
Exit / Exit Date	The date a participant's Services have ended. However, a customer may be enrolled in a Follow-up Service for one calendar year after Exit.
IWDS	The Illinois Workforce Development System is a statewide database that tracks information about each participant.
Performance Standards	A set of goals established in concert with Career Link, the State of Illinois and the federal Department of Labor.
Service Provider or Program Operator	Once an applicant has been accepted for funding, they are now identified as a Service Provider or Program Operator. Any awarded contracts will explain your responsibilities as a sub-recipient of federal funding.
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.

Introduction

Requesting Organization Information

The United Workforce Development Board (UWDB), doing business as Career Link, is a private nonprofit organization responsible for administering Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I funds in Local Workforce Innovation Area 15 (LWIA 15). This region encompasses Fulton, Marshall, Mason, McLean, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford counties in Central Illinois. WIOA is a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) program, administered in Illinois by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and represents the nation's primary federal investment in workforce development.

Career Link provides a full range of workforce services to help job seekers gain employment, obtain training, and access supportive resources, while assisting businesses in developing a skilled and competitive workforce. All services are delivered in accordance with performance standards established by DOL, DCEO, and the UWDB.

The UWDB provides governance, oversight, and policy direction for WIOA-funded programs in LWIA 15. It allocates WIOA Title I funds to Career Link and ensures the responsible and compliant use of federal resources to meet the workforce needs of individuals and employers throughout the region.

To enhance service capacity and participant outcomes, Career Link seeks qualified Service Provider(s) to deliver structured pre- and post-training services for WIOA Tuition Assistance participants. Service Providers will collaborate closely with Career Link Career Planners to ensure timely, seamless, and compliant delivery of services that support participant readiness, training success, and transition to employment, while aligning with the region's workforce needs.

Background

Career Link administers WIOA funding for low-income adults (18+) and dislocated workers—individuals laid off through no fault of their own. These funds support training and employment services designed to prepare participants for in-demand, high-growth occupations within the region.

Eligible participants may receive Tuition Assistance for approved occupational skills training at colleges and training providers. This assistance helps individuals pursue employment in high-growth fields through a comprehensive Individual Employment Plan,

developed collaboratively with a Career Planner. Tuition Assistance may cover up to \$22,000 in tuition and fees, as well as the costs of books, required supplies, and supportive—such as transportation or childcare—needed to successfully complete an approved training program.

Career Link also provides On-the-Job Training (OJT) for participants placed with local employers in high-growth occupations. OJT reimburses employers for up to 75% of an eligible new hire’s wages during a structured, customized training period, allowing employers to train participants in the specific skills, tasks, tools, and methods required for the job.

While Tuition Assistance and OJT provide essential financial and on-the-job supports, individualized integrated career readiness services are critical to ensure participants are prepared for training, remain engaged through program completion, and successfully transition into unsubsidized employment. This RFP seeks qualified Service Provider(s) to deliver these services on a continuous, year-round basis, aligned with Career Link’s IEPs and program objectives, and designed to maximize participant readiness, completion, and long-term employment success.

Statement of Need

The Regional Plan of the North Central Economic Development Region 3 identifies Healthcare, Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing, and Construction as priority industries within Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) 15. These sectors offer strong wages, clear advancement opportunities, and sustained employer demand; however, successful entry into these occupations requires more than occupational training alone. Individuals pursuing WIOA-funded Tuition Assistance often face barriers related to job readiness, career navigation, labor market awareness, and post-training job placement that, if unaddressed, can limit training success and employment outcomes.

Career Link has identified a critical need for Tuition Assistance participants to receive job search and other career services both prior to the authorization of training and following the completion of training. Coordinated pre- and post-training services—including career exploration, employability skills development, job readiness preparation, and job placement support—are essential to ensure participants are appropriately prepared for training, aligned with in-demand occupations, and positioned to transition successfully into unsubsidized employment.

To meet this need, Career Link requires specialized, capacity-driven partners capable of delivering these services consistently across Central Illinois. Demand for Tuition Assistance continues to exceed the system's internal capacity to provide individualized career and job search services, particularly for participants with limited work history, justice involvement, academic barriers, or other challenges to employment. Procuring qualified subcontractors will enhance service capacity, ensure compliance with evolving WIOA requirements, improve training completion and employment outcomes, and strengthen alignment between workforce investments and regional employer demand. These services are essential to maximizing the return on WIOA training investments and supporting a skilled, job-ready workforce in the region's targeted industries.

Program Requirements

Program Design

Overview

The purpose of this project is to procure qualified Service Provider(s) to deliver a comprehensive continuum of Integrated Career Readiness Services for WIOA Tuition Assistance participants. The program's primary objective is to prepare participants for training, support them during participation, and guide them into unsubsidized employment in high-demand occupations. Selected Service Provider(s) will collaborate closely with Career Link Career Planners to ensure all services align with participants' Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) and program objectives.

As a pilot initiative, Career Link reserves the right to adjust service expectations, delivery methods, or performance measures during the contract period to improve outcomes, respond to emerging needs, and ensure compliance with evolving WIOA and state guidance. Service Providers are expected to actively participate in continuous improvement efforts, data collection, and program evaluation to refine service delivery models.

Career Link enrolls participants on a rolling, year-round basis, and referrals may occur individually or in groups. **The selected subcontractor may be expected to serve approximately 200 enrolled WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker participants annually**, or over the course of the contract period, depending on funding availability and enrollment levels. Service Providers must be capable of delivering services on a continuous, flexible schedule. Services may be delivered in-person, virtually, or through a hybrid approach, and should accommodate both group and individual needs.

This Statement of Work outlines the scope, components, and delivery expectations of services under this pilot program. Service Providers are expected to provide high-quality, participant-centered, and outcomes-focused services while maintaining compliance with WIOA regulations, Career Link policies, and contractual obligations.

Program Components

The selected Service Provider(s) will be responsible for delivering the following three program components on a rolling basis, responding promptly to participant referrals from Career Link. Services must be flexible, participant-centered, and delivered in person, virtually, or through a hybrid model to meet individual and group needs.

1. Career Readiness and Barrier Identification

The goal of this component is to ensure participants enter training with a clear understanding of their career pathway, realistic awareness of their strengths and barriers, and the necessary supports in place to successfully engage in and complete occupational training.

Service Providers will work in close partnership with Career Link Career Planners to support participants' preparation for occupational training through targeted barrier identification, career readiness support, and implementation of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs). While Career Link conducts comprehensive assessments and develops each participant's IEP, the Service Provider will assist with IEP implementation by addressing identified needs, recommending supports, and delivering services that promote training readiness and sustained engagement.

Services under this component include identifying and addressing barriers that may affect training participation or completion, such as limited work experience, justice involvement, transportation, childcare, housing instability, health-related challenges, or other personal circumstances. Service Providers will connect participants to appropriate supportive services, partner agencies, and community resources, and will monitor engagement and outcomes to ensure barriers are effectively mitigated.

Service Providers will also deliver career exploration activities to ensure participants understand in-demand occupations, labor market information, and the skills and expectations associated with high-growth careers. Social-emotional support—including problem-solving, conflict resolution, stress management, and resilience-building—must be incorporated to strengthen participant confidence and persistence. Providers may employ or contract with a licensed Social Worker to assist in identifying invisible disabilities or

hidden barriers and to support participants across pre-training, training, and post-training phases.

All services must be delivered promptly upon referral and on a rolling, year-round basis to accommodate continuous enrollment. Services may be provided in person, virtually, or through a hybrid format to ensure timely access and responsiveness to participant needs.

2. Employability Skills Development (During Training)

The goal of this component is to ensure participants develop the skills, confidence, and industry understanding necessary to complete training successfully and compete for high-quality employment opportunities.

During the training period, Service Providers will deliver structured, skill-building instruction and activities designed to strengthen participants' career readiness, employability, and persistence through training completion. Services will focus on building the practical, professional, and personal competencies needed for successful entry into unsubsidized employment.

This component includes résumé and interview preparation tailored to participants' targeted occupations, including development of professional résumés and cover letters and practice interviews aligned with industry expectations. Service Providers will deliver workplace readiness instruction covering professional communication, workplace expectations, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, accountability, and professionalism.

Service Providers will also build essential and transferable skills, including critical thinking, adaptability, academic readiness, and digital literacy required for training and modern workplaces. Financial literacy instruction—such as budgeting, banking, or financial planning—may be provided as appropriate to support employment stability. To enhance industry awareness, Service Providers will facilitate exposure to real-world work environments through employer tours, guest speakers, or worksite visits aligned with participants' career pathways.

Services must be delivered flexibly, in individual or group formats, to accommodate continuous referrals and varying training schedules. Ongoing case management and social-emotional support must be integrated throughout the training period to monitor engagement, address emerging challenges, support stress management, and reinforce persistence through training completion.

3. Job Search, Placement, and Retention Services

The goal of this component is to ensure smooth transitions from training into unsubsidized employment, improve job placement and retention outcomes, and support participants in building sustainable careers in high-demand fields.

In the final months of training or immediately following training completion, Service Providers will deliver individualized employment services designed to support participants' successful entry into and retention in the workforce. Services will include one-on-one job search coaching, employer research, application assistance, and interview preparation tailored to participants' targeted occupations.

Service Providers will actively engage local employers to facilitate job referrals, communicate participant readiness, and align participant skills with high-growth occupational needs. Providers will also verify training completion and the attainment of any required industry-recognized credentials or licenses necessary for employment.

Following placement, Service Providers will maintain regular contact with participants for 12 months to support employment retention. Post-placement services will address workplace challenges, reinforce employability and professional skills, and support participants in navigating time management, communication, and job expectations. Ongoing case management will continue during this period to identify and resolve emerging barriers, support professional growth, and connect participants to resources that promote long-term stability and career advancement.

All services under this component must be delivered on a rolling, continuous basis to ensure timely and responsive support for participants exiting training throughout the year.

Service Delivery Format

- Services may be delivered in-person, virtually, or via a hybrid approach. Providers must have the capacity to adjust delivery methods to meet participant needs, maximize engagement, and maintain continuity of services.
- Providers may assign a Project Coordinator and/or licensed Social Worker to support case management, social-emotional guidance, and barrier identification.
- Service Providers must coordinate closely with Career Link staff, including Career Planners, to align services, troubleshoot issues, and maintain compliance with WIOA regulations.

Staffing

Service Providers must assign qualified staff with the experience and capacity necessary to deliver all components of Integrated Career Readiness Services in a timely, participant-centered manner. At a minimum, providers may designate a part- or full-time Project Coordinator to oversee daily program operations, manage referrals, coordinate service delivery, and serve as the primary liaison with Career Link Career Planners. The Project Coordinator will ensure services are aligned with Individual Employment Plans (IEPs),

delivered on a continuous, year-round basis, and responsive to participant needs. Staffing levels must be sufficient to support rolling enrollment, provide individualized attention, and maintain consistent engagement across pre-training, training, and post-training phases.

Service Providers may also assign or hire a licensed Social Worker to serve as Project Coordinator or as additional team member. The Social Worker may provide social-emotional support, assist in identifying hidden or complex barriers to training or employment, and support participants in navigating personal, behavioral, or situational challenges that could impact program success. While the Social Worker's role is primarily focused on pre-training barrier identification and readiness, they may also contribute to employability skills coaching during training and retention support following job placement, as appropriate. The use of a licensed Social Worker is intended to strengthen participant stability, persistence, and long-term outcomes while complementing—not duplicating—the case management responsibilities of Career Link Career Planners.

Deliverables

Service Provider(s) are expected to:

- Assist the Career Planner in developing and maintaining an IEP for all participants.
- Provide scheduled pre-training workshops and job readiness instruction.
- Document case management interactions and participant progress.
- Track participant progress, including training completion, placement, and retention.
- Submit monthly reports to Career Link including performance metrics, outcome data, and fiscal invoicing.

Performance and Compliance Requirements

- All services must comply with WIOA regulations and Career Link policies.
- Services may only be delivered to participants certified as eligible by Career Link.
- Service Providers must maintain confidentiality and safeguard participant records.
- Service Providers must collaborate with Career Link staff to ensure consistent program delivery and effective communication.

Coordination with Career Link

- Career Link will provide participant referrals and eligibility verification.
- Career Link Career Planners will serve as the primary point of contact for guidance, collaboration, and technical assistance.

- Service Providers are expected to collaborate regularly with Career Link to ensure alignment of services, troubleshoot issues, and maintain compliance with all program requirements.

Eligibility for Services

To participate in this program, individuals must meet all applicable eligibility requirements under WIOA Adult or Dislocated Worker programs. Career Link staff will be responsible for determining and certifying participant eligibility, including verification of program category, prior to enrollment in services.

Career Link will identify and refer fully eligible participants to the selected Service Provider(s) for pre- and post-training services. Service Providers may not enroll individuals or initiate services until eligibility certification has been completed and a referral has been issued by Career Link. WIOA funds may not be expended on training or related services for individuals who have not been fully certified as eligible in accordance with federal and state WIOA regulations.

General Requirements

Communication and cooperation between the Service Provider and Career Link staff are critical to program success. Frequent, ongoing communication is required. Service Providers must submit quarterly estimates of their expenditures and planned enrollments to Career Link.

Each participant must have a follow-up period of one year. The Service Provider will lead follow-up efforts in partnership with Career Link, which will provide guidance as needed. A full-year of follow-up should be planned for all enrolled participants after their exit from the program.

Career Link cannot pay for any service or activity that is already provided by another organization if those services are reasonably available to Career Link clients. Activities funded by Career Link must be ***new, additional or unique***. Combining instruction to Career Link participants with non-Career Link participants is discouraged due to the challenges of segregating costs.

The Service Provider will be monitored for compliance with contract terms by Career Link and, possibly, DCEO monitors. Service Provider(s) are responsible for recruiting eligible participants. Applicants may request funding within their proposals to support outreach and recruitment activities.

Supportive Services

Participants may be eligible for WIOA supportive services which are designed to help participants overcome practical barriers that may interfere with successful participation in training or employment. These services may include assistance with transportation, childcare, work-related clothing or tools, testing or licensing fees, and other needs directly related to completing an approved training program or securing employment. Supportive Services are provided on an as-needed basis, must be reasonable and necessary, and are intended to complement—not replace—other available resources. All Supportive Services require prior approval and must be documented in the participant’s Individual Employment Plan to ensure alignment with program goals and compliance with WIOA requirements. Career Link will be responsible for arranging and managing Supportive Services. The Service Provider will assist Career Link Career Planners by identifying participant barriers and recommending appropriate Supportive Service needs.

Performance Outcomes

Applicants must specify expected minimum performance levels that meet or exceed the following standards:

Employment: Aim for 80% of participants to secure unsubsidized employment and remain employed in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit.

Measurable Skills Gains (MSG): Participants in OJT or post-secondary training should achieve at least one MSG per program year. For example, completing 12 or more college credit hours equals one MSG.

Credentials: Aim for 79% of participants enrolled in post-secondary training to earn an industry-recognized credential (e.g., Associate’s Degree).

These goals represent suggested minimum standards. Program experience may indicate adjustments are needed. Participants may be exited from the program if goals are not met or progress is not feasible.

Funding & Administrative Requirements

Funding

Applicants may request funds for expenses that are necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the program, in accordance with the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act guidelines. Funds may not duplicate services that are already available to participants.

Initial contract awards are limited to \$250,000. Budget increases or adjustments may be approved during the contract if deemed necessary and reasonable by Career Link.

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

Equipment purchases require prior approval from Career Link and 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

1. The release of this Request for Proposals does not commit the United Workforce Development Board, Inc. to award a grant, to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal, or to procure a contract for services or supplies prior to issuance of a written agreement.
2. All proposals submitted will be subject to competitive review.
3. The United Workforce Development Board, Inc. has the right to reject any and all proposals that do not follow the format instructions set forth by this Request for Proposals.

4. The United Workforce Development Board, Inc. retains the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with all qualified sources or to cancel in part, or in entirety, this Request for Proposals if it is in the Board's best interest to do so. The Board may require the selected bidders to participate in negotiations and to rewrite their applications as agreed upon during the negotiations.
5. The United Workforce Development Board, Inc. may modify any portion or terms of this Request for Proposals and may solicit additional proposals as necessary. The United Workforce Development Board, Inc. reserves the right to modify or change this RFP based on rules, regulations, requirements put forth by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, or other regulatory entities.
6. Proprietary rights to all data, materials, and documentation originated and prepared for the United Workforce Development Board, Inc. pursuant to the subcontract agreement shall belong exclusively to the Board.
7. The United Workforce Development Board, Inc. retains the right to accept, reject, or negotiate proposals received, as well as to vary or waive any provisions set forth in this request for proposals in the best interests of the Board.
8. All proposals will be subject to negotiation of terms, conditions, and amount.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Sub-recipients/ sub-contractors must have:
 - a. a financial management system in place to track and record grant expenditures (i.e., QuickBooks, Sage MIP);
 - b. oversight provided by a Board;
 - c. registered at Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) and System for Award Management (SAM) websites (www.sam.gov); and
 - d. not been debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in federal assistance programs or activities.

12. Applicants must include a statement of assurance confirming that, if selected as the Service Provider, they will fully comply with policies and practices that promote fair hiring, promotion, and recruitment in all job classifications to achieve equality in employment. This includes compliance with the non-discrimination and non-sectarian provisions under Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, as well as the following federal and state laws and regulations:
 - a. Executive Order 11246;
 - b. Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended;
 - c. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975;
 - d. Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended;
 - e. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended;
 - f. U.S. Department of Labor Regulations at 29 CFR Part 37;
 - g. The Illinois Human Rights Act, as amended;
 - h. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;
 - i. The Equal Pay Act of 1963;
 - j. The affirmative action provisions of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistant Act of 1974;
 - k. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and
 - l. The anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Application Instructions

Career Link invites qualified organizations to submit proposals to operate the Integrated Career Readiness Services program. The instructions below outline the requirements for proposal formatting, submission procedures, required content, budget and funding parameters, compliance standards, and evaluation criteria.

Letter of Intent to Apply (PDF)

To assist Career Link in budget forecasting and planning for the proposal review process, all organizations intending to submit a proposal in response to this Request for Proposals (RFP) must submit a Letter of Intent to Apply.

The Letter of Intent is not binding and does not obligate the organization to submit a full proposal. However, submission of a Letter of Intent is required in order to submit a proposal.

The Letter of Intent must include:

- Organization Name
- Mailing Address
- Primary Contact Person
- Email address and phone number of the primary contact.
- Statement confirming the organization's intention to submit a full proposal.
- Acknowledgement of the RFP deadline (April 24, 2026) and understanding of submission requirements.
- Signature of primary contact person

The signed Letter of Intent must be submitted as a PDF document via email to David Vaughn at dvaughn@careerlink16.com no later than Friday, April 3, 2026, at 5:00PM.

Organizations that submit a Letter of Intent will receive any RFP updates, addenda, or clarifications issued during the proposal period. Only organizations that submit a Letter of Intent by the deadline will be eligible to submit a proposal in response to this RFP.

Failure to submit a Letter of Intent by the stated deadline will render an organization ineligible to submit a proposal.

Proposal Submission Requirements

- All responses must be typed.
- Proposals should be clear, thorough, and complete. Include examples or explanations to demonstrate understanding of program requirements.
- Funding decisions will be based on clarity, quality, and completeness of the proposal.

Applicants must submit three separate documents in a single email:

1. Cover Letter (PDF) – Signed by an authorized representative, confirming intent to apply and readiness to enter into a contract if selected.
2. Proposal (Microsoft Word) – Must address all Required Application Elements and align with the Proposal Rating Guide.
3. Budget Application (Microsoft Excel) – Complete the provided template (Attachment B / downloadable at www.CareerLinkIL.com/contact/rfp).

File Naming Convention:

- Cover Letter: [Organization Name]_CoverLetter.pdf
- Proposal: [Organization Name]_Proposal.docx
- Budget: [Organization Name]_Budget.xlsx

Optional: Signed letters of support may be submitted as PDFs in the same email as your Proposal, but are not required.

Cover Letter (PDF)

- Signed by an authorized representative.
- Confirms intent to apply and readiness to enter into a contract if selected.
- Include the name, title, and contact information of the signatory.

Proposal (Word)

The Word document should include:

Applicant Information

1. Organization Name, Address, Telephone Number, FEIN, and DUNS
2. Name and title of the highest-ranking staff member
3. Contact Person (if different), including phone and email
4. Financial management system used to track grant expenditures (e.g., QuickBooks, Sage MIP)
5. Brief organizational history, mission, staffing, accomplishments, and relevant experience

Required Application Elements

(Scoring per Proposal Rating Guide)

1. **Organizational Capacity and Staffing (5 points)**
 - Describe your ability to deliver the program, including staff roles, qualifications, and whether positions are new or reassigned.
 - Explain how staffing levels are sufficient to serve the program's target participants.
2. **Program Design and Approach (30 points)**
 - Describe your approach to implementing all three program components.
 - Include details on:
 - Program structure, sequence, duration, and participant entry/exit design
 - Group sizes, number of cohorts per year, and staff assigned to instruction or case management
 - Curriculum topics, instructional methods, and materials used to deliver pre- and post-training services
 - Strategies for participant engagement, retention, and successful transition into training or employment (including Tuition Assistance or On-the-Job Training)
 - Plans for ongoing support, follow-up, and performance tracking for a minimum 12-month period
 - Any innovative approaches or practices that enhance participant outcomes

3. **Budget and Cost Effectiveness (15 points)**
 - Complete and attach the Budget Application (Excel template) to your email.
 - In your Word document, detail all costs (salary, benefits, materials, facility, travel, etc.) and explain cost calculation methods.
 - Identify any shared costs and Career Link's portion.
 - Demonstrate that the proposed budget is reasonable, cost-effective, and aligned with the scope of services.
4. **Experience with Similar Programs (10 points)**
 - Describe your organization's experience administering similar programs, target populations, or workforce development initiatives.
 - Include measurable outcomes, such as participant completion rates, training enrollment, job placement, and retention metrics.
5. **Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance (0 or 5 points)**
 - Provide assurance of compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws. Service providers must comply with Section 188 of WIOA and applicable federal/state laws, as listed in the Statement of Work.
6. **Ownership by Female or Minority (0 or 5 points)**
 - Indicate whether the organization is owned by a female or minority, identifying owner(s).
7. **Additional Information (Optional)**
 - Include any other relevant information that demonstrates organizational capacity, expertise, or unique approaches.

Contract Budget Application (Excel)

Enter your proposed budget on the **Contract Budget tab only**; other tabs are for Career Link use.

- Enter all information in the **unlocked blue cells**.
- For staffing costs: enter the "% Wages & Benefits Attributed to Contract" before entering wages, hours, and weeks.
- You may enter To Be Determined instead of names for staff positions yet to be filled.
- Ignore ICAPS and Incentive sections; they do not apply to Adult and Dislocated Worker programs.
- Programmatic costs must be calculated based on the number of participants served.
- Equipment purchases are not allowed without prior approval.
- Initial contracts are up to **\$250,000**. Budget adjustments may be considered by Career Link if necessary and reasonable.

- Funds must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the program and **cannot duplicate existing services.**

Allowable Expenses Include:

- Instructional staff salaries and fringe benefits
- Supplies and instructional materials
- Travel and facility rental
- Student incentives and student travel
- Conference costs if directly connected to the program

Submission Checklist

- Signed Cover Letter (PDF)
- Application Proposal (Word) addressing all Required Application Elements
- Completed Budget Application (Excel)
- Letters of Support (optional)
- All documents named correctly and submitted in one email.

Applicants are expected to provide thorough, clear, and comprehensive responses to maximize scoring potential. All responses must be typed, organized according to the required sections, and reflect a solid understanding of the program requirements. Additionally, applicants must include all required attachments and follow the submission instructions precisely to avoid disqualification.

Proposal Review Process

The selection of subcontractor shall be in accordance with federal, state, and local standards. The primary consideration in selecting agencies or organizations to deliver services shall be the effectiveness of the agency or organization in delivering comparable or related services based on demonstrated performance in terms of the likelihood of meeting performance goals, costs, quality of training, and characteristics of participants. Proposals must be for a single organization and proposals that include subcontracting part or all of the services to be provided will not be considered.

Funds provided under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act shall not be used to duplicate facilities or services available in the area unless it is demonstrated that alternative services or facilities would be more effective or more likely to achieve the performance goals.

Proposals will be evaluated by committee using the Proposal Rating Guide (Attachment A).

- Minimum score for eligibility: 40 points.
- Awards are subject to available funding and program priorities.
- Career Link reserves the right not to award a contract.

Appendix

Proposal Rating Guide

Integrated Career Readiness Services – 2026

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. 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	
4. Does the applicant have experience in successfully administering similar programs?	10	
5. Has the applicant provided the necessary Equal Opportunity assurances?	0 or 5	
6. Is the organization owned by a female or minority?	0 or 5	
TOTAL	70	

Proposals submitted for consideration must attain a minimum score of 40 on our rating scale, indicating satisfactory compliance with our requirements, to be eligible for review and potential award of a contract.

Rater _____ Date _____