



EVALUATIVE STUDY SERVICES

PA CareerLink® and Local Workforce Development Board Programs

Request for Proposals for the Central Region

Centre · Clinton · Columbia · Lycoming · Mifflin · Montour · Northumberland · Snyder · Union

Issue Date: January 19, 2022

Submission Deadline: February 16, 2022

The enclosed specifications may be modified as required per the United States Department of Labor, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the PA Department of Human Services, the Advance Central PA Workforce Development Board or Local Elected Officials Board without prior notice to Proposers.

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Section 1: Introduction

Advance Central PA

Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation (CPWDC), doing business as Advance Central PA, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization formed in 1999 and is a local Workforce Development Board (WDB) authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. The Central Region Local Workforce Area includes Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Mifflin, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties (referred to as Central Region).

Designated as a WDB, Advance Central PA is the grant recipient and administrator of these and other employment and training funds received for programs operated throughout the Central Region. Advance Central PA has a federal mandate to be the lead organization for workforce development planning and to arrange for a system of service delivery that meets the workforce needs of youth, jobseekers, and business alike. Advance Central PA is responsible for developing and implementing strategies around a broad workforce development agenda. Advance Central PA's diverse partners in the workforce development system range from public agencies, to private and non-profit businesses, to education and training providers

including secondary schools, to community and economic development partnerships, to job seekers using the PA CareerLink® system, and young people.

Advance Central PA is governed by a private-sector led Workforce Development Board (WDB) representing diverse sectors in business, labor, community development, and education. Further, one commissioner from each of the nine counties in the Central Region serves on the Local Elected Officials Board (LEO) with specific governance and oversight. All are dedicated to increasing the quality and accessibility of services for businesses, job seekers, and young people.

Advance Central PA is an equal opportunity employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Purpose of Request for Proposal

Advance Central PA, through this RFP, competitively seeks a qualified provider of independent third-party evaluation services to assist in implementing evidence based contracting and evaluation tools that result in continuous improvement of Advance Central PA's workforce development programs. Advance Central PA currently tracks WIOA Common Measures and other metrics as required by funders, but seeks to expand the tools that can be used to measure the effectiveness of our workforce development programs to ensure our investments and energy have the greatest return on investment for our region.

As part of this process, the selected provider will conduct evaluative research to establish a baseline and identify areas of improvement related to: meeting the employment and education needs of youth, adults and dislocated workers; providing relevant value-added services to businesses; and evaluating subcontractors on their ability to meet and exceed the expectations of stakeholder customers (businesses, job seekers, and youth). The selected provider will conduct all research including gathering data, performing interviews with WDB and PA CareerLink® partner staff, program participants, and businesses. The selected provider will compile results into a briefing report and make recommendations for continuous improvement ensuring the Central PA CareerLink® network and services provided are relevant, efficient, and effective. The selected provider will also provide data resources, forms, evaluation tools, etc. that Advance Central PA can implement and use for future analysis of our programs that will also help us determine the best metrics we should measure in determining the effectiveness of our programs.

Funds released through this RFP will be contracted to provide third-party evaluation services and finalized reports clearly documenting recommendations for improvement, clear action steps, and best practices.

By submitting a proposal, an organization agrees that they must adhere to any and all Federal, State, and Advance Central PA policies.

Program Locations/PA CareerLink® Locations

Services to be evaluated are focused in and radiate from the six physical and one mobile Central PA CareerLink® sites. The PA CareerLink® is part of the American Job Center network, a one-stop solution to workforce needs in local communities across the United States. The locations in Central PA are as follows.

1. **PA CareerLink® Centre County**, 240 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte
2. **PA CareerLink® Clinton County**, 8 North Grove Street, Suite F, Lock Haven
3. **PA CareerLink® Columbia/Montour Counties**, 415 Central Road, Suite 2, Bloomsburg
4. **PA CareerLink® Lycoming County***, 329 Pine Street, Williamsport
5. **PA CareerLink® Mifflin County***, 6395 SR 103 North, MCIDC Plaza, Building 58, Lewistown
6. **PA CareerLink® Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties***, 225 Market Street, Sunbury
7. **The Link**, mobile career center

*PA CareerLink® locations with an asterisk are full service comprehensive sites which are fully staffed and open to the public. The affiliated sites are beneath each comprehensive site; they have smaller

footprints and are closed to the public during certain hours per week so staff has adequate time for appointments with registered job seekers and businesses.

PA CareerLink® Programming

As an American Job Center, PA CareerLink® is a “one-stop” service center for young people, jobseekers, and businesses. As such, WIOA-defined partners all play a role in overall service delivery and outcomes, however Advance Central PA does not have direct oversight or contracts for all PA CareerLink® programs. This study shall include a thorough evaluation of the following Advance Central PA contracted programs and include recommendations on improved alignment of all key partner programs to improve the effectiveness of the local PA CareerLink® network.

Key partners to be included in the study include but are not limited to:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law on July 22, 2014. The Act can be accessed at: www.doleta.gov/WIOA. WIOA Final Rules resources are available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/regulations>. Core WIOA partners and the number of providers/employers of record across the Central Region for each is as follows:

Advance Central PA WIOA contracted services:

- Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker (2)
- Title I Out-of-School Youth (1)
- Title I In-School Youth (1)

Key WIOA programs not contracted by Advance Central PA:

- Title II Adult Basic Education (4)
- Title III Wagner Peyser: (1)
- Title IV Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (1)

TANF Youth Development (Advance Central PA contracted program)

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services partners with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry to allocate and oversee the TANF Youth Development (TANF YD) grants meant to ensure high-quality workforce development activities are available to low-income youth. TANF YD eligibility requirements include verification of low-income status. The most recent TANF YD Program Manual (2021-2022) and accompanying attachments is available at the following website with an issue date 04/13/2021: <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/Pages/Pennsylvania's-Workforce-System-Directives.aspx>

EARN (Advance Central PA contracted program)

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services employment & training program, EARN, currently is granted to local Workforce Development Boards, including Advance Central PA. The program goal is to help families who receive TANF or SNAP in resolving barriers, increasing skills, and attaining self-sufficiency through meaningful employment. The current EARN Manual is posted to Advance Central PA's website as an attachment to this RFP.

Other Advance Central PA Programs/Grants to be included:

Advance Central PA applies for competitive funding through local, state and federal programs. As part of the evaluation, Advance Central PA is seeking a review of the goals and outcomes of our existing projects under these programs to help evaluate their impact.

- Business and Education Partnership Grant

- Industry tours and job shadows for high school students
- Parent Pathway Nights for parents and students
- Next Generation Sector Partnerships
 - MADE In Central PA Manufacturing Partnership
 - Central PA Healthcare Partnership

Section 2: RFP Process and Instructions for Submitting a Proposal

Eligible Applicants

Proposals will be accepted from any private for-profit entity, public or private non-profit entity, government agency, local educational agency, community-based organization, or labor organization that demonstrates the experience, qualifications, and capacity to deliver third-party evaluation services and reporting.

Eligible organizations with or without previous experience as a contractor with Advance Central PA are encouraged to submit proposals. Proposals from consortia, partnerships or other combinations of organizations are allowable, but proposals must identify one organization as the lead agency with which Advance Central PA will subcontract directly.

Proposers must agree to a provision of services and demonstrate an ability to fulfill requirements of this RFP.

Expected Timeline

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| RFP Released: (Available at www.AdvanceCentralPA.org) | January 19, 2022 |
| Questions Submitted by: | Ongoing until February 15, 2022 |
| Answers Posted by: (Available at www.AdvanceCentralPA.org) | Ongoing until February 18, 2022 |
| Notify Advance Central PA of Intent to Submit Proposal by: (emailed to klucas@AdvanceCentralPA.org) | February 1, 2022 |
| Proposals Due by 4:00 p.m. EST: | February 16, 2022 |
| Evaluation Committee Review and Negotiations Begin: | February 17, 2022 |
| Recommendation to Advance Central PA Executive Committee of the Workforce Development Board: | February 25, 2022 |
| Notification on Status of Proposals: | February 28, 2022 |
| Anticipated Contract(s) Start: | March 1, 2022 |
| Service Delivery Start Date: | March 1, 2022 |

Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance will be provided through a written question and answer format. Applicants will be given an opportunity to identify specific questions and submit them in writing to Advance Central PA via email only. Questions must be emailed to:

Korrie Lucas, Assistant Director: klucas@AdvanceCentralPA.org.

Answers to submitted questions will be posted on www.AdvanceCentralPA.org within 4 business days of receipt. Consistent with strict procurement policies, Advance Central PA will provide no technical or program assistance to individual proposers.

Proposal Submission

Responses must be typed, using at least a 10-point font and be single sided with 1-inch margins with page numbers in the lower right-hand corner. Proposers are expected to comply with the page limitations for each section of the response as listed in proposal requirement sections of this request for proposals.

Proposals **saved as a PDF** (not scanned) or Microsoft Word document along with the **Excel Budget Form** must be submitted electronically to: klucas@AdvanceCentralPA.org with the following subject line: **RE: Evaluative Study Proposal**.

Late submissions will not be considered.

Review Process

Stage 1: Advance Central PA staff will initially evaluate each proposal for acceptability, with emphasis placed on completeness and responsiveness to requisite program criteria.

Stage 2: Proposals that have met the minimum criteria will then be reviewed and ranked by an Evaluation Committee comprised of members who have no fiduciary interest in competing for this funding opportunity and no perceived or real conflict in providing an objective study and final report.

Stage 3: The recommendations of the Evaluation Committee will be presented to the Advance Central PA Workforce Development Board's Executive Committee for approval.

Contracts will be issued directly to the selected provider by Advance Central PA. It is anticipated that a cost reimbursement contract will be awarded as a result of this RFP solicitation; provider will be reimbursed actual, allowable and allocable costs not to exceed the maximums stated in the contract.

Scope of Work

Advance Central PA seeks a qualified provider of services who will provide all aspects of an objective third-party evaluation of service delivery and operations via the Central PA CareerLink® from evaluation design, collection of data/evidence, analyzation, recommendation, through to deliverables which include a final report and presentation.

Staff qualifications include professionals from relevant organizations skilled in delivering the scope of work as described which includes professionals from universities.

Advance Central PA will make available all current tracking and evaluation tools utilized by Advance Central PA. Advance Central PA currently has a subscription to EMSI which we use to gather data. Advance Central PA staff can assist in the evaluation utilizing this resource as necessary.

Note that Advance Central PA reserves the right to approve or deny, in part or full, any program model suggestions.

1. Lead project kick-off meetings with key Advance Central PA staff and as appropriate and necessary for successful project completion such as to seek advisement on stakeholders to include in data collection processes, etc.
2. Submit monthly project status reports to Advance Central PA.

3. In-person study of operations within each of the Central Region PA CareerLink® sites, including a “secret-shopper” evaluation of introductory welcome services as well as forthright/direct observation and research.
4. Interviews with various partner staff and key stakeholders including: job seeker/program participants and customers and business customers either virtually or in-person.
5. Performance evaluation improvement analysis and recommendations with an eye to moving Advance Central PA from a focus on subcontractor output to one focused on outcomes. For example, rather than measuring just the number of job seekers who participate in an event also measure the impact of the event for the job seekers, the business, and the community.
6. Facilitate an exit conference with Advance Central PA staff to review preliminary findings, seek clarifications, etc. as a final report is developed.
7. Produce a clear, objective, professional final report outlining best practices, areas for continuous improvement along with actionable recommendations to that end, and risks and actionable recommendations to resolve them.
8. Produce a clear plan of action for Advance Central PA to pursue to improve evaluation of subcontractor performance outcomes, including recommendations for measures and use of available data.
9. Present findings to the Advance Central PA Workforce Development Board and Local Elected Officials Board.

COVID-19/Remote Services

Respondents must submit evidence they are able to quickly adapt services to meet changing environmental demands including virtual interviews and meetings. Quality of services must not be diminished during times of remote work.

Deliverables

Advance Central PA requires the following deliverables:

1. **Objective Third-Party Evaluation Report**
This report should clearly outline the research completed and stakeholders involved in the study, findings, best practices, relevance and quality of services to program participants and customers including business customers, risks and/or gaps in services, opportunities for improvement, and clear actionable recommendations to improve service delivery quality, efficiency, relevance, and performance.

The final report shall be delivered on or before June 30, 2022.

2. **Recommendations for Continuous Subcontractor Evaluation Report**
This final report will outline clear action steps Advance Central PA should consider in order to evaluate subcontractor performance and outcomes in meaningful ways that will bring about continuous improvement. The report should help Advance Central PA move to a more outcome-based system of evaluation to show the true impact to the stakeholder and the community and objective analysis of subcontractor performance. This report shall include data resources and tools that can be used by Advance Central PA in implementing evidenced based contracting for continuous improvement.

The final report shall be delivered on or before June 30, 2022.

3. **Presentation to the Workforce Development Board/ Local Elected Officials Board**

The successful respondent shall present key findings from the objective Third-Party Evaluation report to the Advance Central PA Workforce Development Board/ Local Elected Officials Board. A question and answer period will be held.

Section 4: Proposal Budget

A cost reimbursement contract will be finalized during final contract negotiations with successful respondent. The proposer shall develop a line-item budget that will enable the proposal to meet the intent and requirements of the program, ensure successful implementation of the project and be cost-effective. The proposer should prepare a realistic and prudent budget avoiding unnecessary or unusual expenditures that would detract from the accomplishment of the objectives and activities of the project. The following information is provided to assist in the preparation of the budget. Strict adherence to all required and prohibited items is expected.

All contracts require:

- Line item budget for invoicing, program monitoring and audit;
- Monthly invoices for actual costs incurred; and
- Sufficient documentation for all costs incurred.

Estimated Allocations and Budget

The purpose of the Project Budget is to demonstrate how the proposer will implement their plan with the funds available through this program. The budget is the basis for management, fiscal review and audit. Project costs must be directly related to the objectives and activities of the project.

The total available budget for this competitive solicitation is \$45,000.

All activities, services, facilities and/or equipment, including leased items, which will be subcontracted by the proposer, must be competitively procured following applicable regulations. Advance Central PA has final approval of all contract costs before funds are dispersed.

Section 5: Proposal

Cover Sheet/ Agreement and Checklist

Attached, complete the Cover Sheet in its entirety. Indicate agreement with/ability to comply with each requirement listed on the Agreement to Basic Requirements. Use the Checklist to ensure all requested information is provided with your proposal.

Executive Summary

Include up to a two-page overview/summary of your organization and proposal.

Proposal Narrative

Respond to all of the questions asked in the order they are asked. Do not weave your answers into the text; instead, use the question and answer format in your proposal (include the corresponding section letter and number of each question in the narrative response, example: A.1.). Including attachments as indicated in the questions will not count toward the page limitations of each section. The narrative cannot exceed 7 pages.

A. Organizational Capacity and Relevant Experience

1. Provide an overview of your organization and experience.

2. Describe your demonstrated success in providing objective evaluative studies as outlined in the RFP.
3. Describe the key personnel and supervisors who will be assigned to this project, include their professional qualifications in completing a study from start to finish and their experience with workforce development programs or projects of a similar scope.

B. Proposed Work Plan

1. Describe your approach to the proposed plan of work.
2. Provide a timeline with all key project tasks included from contract start through to final deliverables provided to Advance Central PA.
3. Describe each of the key project tasks and services to be provided to result in the Objective Third Party Evaluation Report.
4. Describe each of the key project tasks and services to be provided to result in the Recommendations for Continuous Subcontractor Evaluation Report.
5. Describe an example of similar work providing consultation services to a WDB or similar entity and outline three action items that you have recommended to move WDBs toward overall service delivery/system improvement and three main action items that you have recommended to help WDBs effectively evaluate subcontractor performance and meaningful outcomes.

Budget

A. Budget Narrative

(Limited to 2 Pages)

Submit a narrative that describes the following:

1. How the project's proposed budget supports the stated objectives and activities in the project. At a minimum, please breakdown the budget by personnel, travel, supplies, other operating, etc. with enough detail that we can understand the direct cost of the project.
2. Indirect cost rate (if applicable).
3. Any unusual expenditures.
4. All proposed subcontracts, including the subcontracting organization, the amount that will be subcontracted and the function the subcontractor will fulfill.

B. Budget Form – Attachment

Complete the attached **Budget Form**.

Business License

Proposers must also attach one electronic copy of the current business license if applicable.

Section 8: Disclaimer

Advance Central PA reserves the right to cancel or modify this request for proposal or the scope or funding of an approved WIOA and/or TANF YD program to any extent necessary to ensure compliance with state and/or federal guidelines or if available funding is impacted due to the federal and/or state budget appropriations. All successful proposers must demonstrate the capability to modify the program design in order to comply with new regulations and/or changes to available funds, and by submitting a proposal, agree to do so.

Advance Central PA may, at its discretion, request presentations by, or meetings with, any or all respondents, to clarify or negotiate modifications to the respondent's proposal. However, Advance Central PA reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted.

Advance Central PA may decide not to fund part or all of a proposal even though it is found to be in the competitive range if, in the opinion of CWPDC, the services proposed are not needed, or the costs are higher than CWPDC finds reasonable in relation to the overall funds available, or if past management concerns lead Advance Central PA to believe that the respondent has undertaken more services that it can reasonably provide.

Advance Central PA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, received as a result of this request or to negotiate separately with respondents. A contract for the accepted proposal will be based upon the factors described in this RFP.

Advance Central PA has the right to fund a lower ranked proposal over a high ranked proposal because of valid policy considerations, including but not limited to, organizational experience, geographical considerations, leveraging of outside resources and target populations.

Providers will allow local, state and federal representatives access to all WIOA and TANF YD records, program materials, staff and participants. In addition, providers are required to maintain all WIOA and TANF YD records for three years after Advance Central PA submits the final expenditure report to the US Department of Labor.

Advance Central PA reserves the right to determine both the number and funding levels of contracts financially awarded. Such determination will depend upon overall fund availability and other factors arising during the review process. Proposals submitted which are over the maximum amount of funds specified for this RFP will be rejected.

Advance Central PA is not responsible for any costs incurred by respondents prior to the selection. The cost to develop and submit a proposal in response to this RFP is not reimbursable.

This RFP is being solicited based on available funds.

Materials submitted with the proposal, and the proposal itself, become the property of the Advance Central PA and will not be returned.

Advance Central PA must comply with Pennsylvania's Right-To-Know Law, Act 3 of 2008, effective January 1, 2009, and may be requested and required to release information from proposals received in response to this RFP.

All proposals submitted will receive a response as to the action taken by the Advance Central PA. Respondents may request a briefing on the action taken on the proposal.

The submission of a proposal to the Advance Central PA does not assure or imply an award of a contract to the firm submitting the proposal. Advance Central PA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, to negotiate any offer made, and/or to cancel or amend any part of this application package for whatever reason.