

NORTH CENTRAL ARKANSAS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
BOARD

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
ONE-STOP OPERATOR**

Program Year
October 1, 2021
Through June 30, 2023

Release Date: August 1, 2021

Introduction to the Local Area

The North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board (NCAWDB) covers a ten-county local area made up of Cleburne, Fulton, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, White and Woodruff Counties. NCAWDB is made up of county leaders from business, education, labor and government, with the majority of its board members representing the private business sector.

The vision of the North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board is to have a world-class workforce that is well educated, skilled, and working in order to keep North Central Arkansas' economy competitive in the global marketplace.

White River Planning and Development District, Incorporated (WRPDD), a non-profit organization, is the Fiscal Agent, Administrative Entity and Staff Support to the North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board. WRPDD is the current provider for Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. More information can be found at <https://www.ncaworks.com/> or www.wrpdd.org.

The North Central Workforce Development Board is committed to:

- Developing an efficient partnership with employers, the educational system, workforce development partners, and community based organizations to deliver a platform that will prepare a skilled workforce for existing and new employers.
- Enhancing service delivery to employers and jobseekers.
- Increasing awareness of the State's Talent Development System.
- Addressing skill gaps.

Data related to the ten-county area can be found in the current Transitional Regional and Local Plan at <https://www.ncaworks.com/>.

Technical Details

This Request for Proposals was prepared based upon the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 and associated U.S. Department of Labor Regulations and guidance. This Federal Law was implemented to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States. WIOA provides the framework for a national workforce preparation system that is flexible, responsive, customer- focused, and locally managed. Mandatory core program partners include: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation, along with required partners specified in the Act.

Bidders are strongly encouraged to read Training and Employment Guidance Letter 04-15 issued by the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines the vision for the One-Stop system under the WIOA.

The three hallmarks of WIOA include:

1. The needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions, and local boards are accountable for this within the communities they serve.
2. One-Stop Centers provide excellent customer-centric services and focus on continuous improvement; and,
3. The workforce system supports strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

The WIOA is built around the following key principles:

- Increase access and opportunity, particularly for those individuals with barriers to employment, to ensure success in the labor market.
- Support the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system.
- Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts to provide workers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages, and to provide employers with the skilled workers they need to succeed in a global economy.
- Promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services to better address the employment and skill needs of workers, job seekers and employers.
- Increase the prosperity of workers and employers and the economic growth of communities, regions, and states, and the global competitiveness of the United States.
- Provide workforce investment activities, through statewide and local workforce development systems, that increase the employment, retention and earnings of participants, and increase attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials by participants.

The North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board, hereinafter referred to as “**Board**” oversees the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds for the ten-county area. WRPDD currently serves as the local area service provider and the current One-Stop Operator.

In Section 107 of the legislation and in § 678.605 of WIOA Regulations, Local Workforce Boards are required to competitively procure the One-Stop Operator role and responsibilities. The **Board** has tasked a committee of board members to solicit and select a One-Stop Operator. Entities answering this Request for Proposals (RFP) are hereafter referred to as “**Bidders**”.

North Central Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board is soliciting RFP's to identify a single One-Stop Operator for the North Central Arkansas comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Centers:

- Arkansas Workforce Center at Batesville (comprehensive) 398
Barnett Drive
Batesville, Arkansas 72501
- Arkansas Workforce Center at Searcy (comprehensive) 501
W Arch Street
Searcy, Arkansas 72143
- Arkansas Workforce Center at Newport (Affiliate)
Arkansas State University Newport Campus
7648-B Victory Boulevard
Newport, Arkansas 72112

The **Board** in coordination with the Chief Elected Officials and its partners in this ten-county region are responsible for determining the locations of the Workforce Centers.

Purpose of Request for Proposals

The **Board** is seeking vendor/**Bidder** responses through a Request for Proposal (RFP) procurement process. The **Board** will determine **Bidder's** experience and ability to provide services outlined in this RFP that meet applicable State and Federal requirements. Due to Covid-19, the Board has been approved by the Arkansas Department of Labor to offer an electronic submission process. The **Board** met in July and approved this method of submission.

Background and General Information

- A. The Board intends to be as inclusive as possible in this solicitation. The goal is to receive a wide variety of high quality, innovative submissions that meet the workforce development needs of the communities served in North Central Arkansas.
- B. The resulting contract with the successful **Bidder** will be for a 21-month period, October 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023. Based on performance, the **Board** may extend the contract annually for up to a total of four years, ending June 30, 2025, as allowed in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Contract extensions may be based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other factors determined appropriate by the **Board** and Chief Elected Officials. Notice for contract renewal will be made at the start of the fourth quarter each program year. Competitive procurement is required at least every four years according to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

- C. Once the contract has been awarded, the **Board**, in collaboration with the Chief Elected Officials, reserves the right to modify delivery design. In the event the modification requires additional labor hours on the part of the successful **Bidder**, terms will be negotiated and the contract modified. The **Board** also reserves the right to de-obligate funds from the successful **Bidder** if it fails to meet contractual requirements.
- D. The **Board** reserves the right to make an award based on the criteria in this Request for Proposals or to make no awards, if that is deemed to serve the best interests of the **Board** and North Central Arkansas. Any and all bids may be rejected for sound reasons. The submittal process is competitive and follows government procurement rules.
- E. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 provides the framework for a national workforce preparation system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused and locally managed. The **Board** envisions a system that meets the needs of residents and businesses alike.
- F. This Request for Proposals is not in itself an offer of work nor does it commit the **Board** to fund any submittals. The **Board** is not liable for any costs incurred in the preparation or research involved in the development of the response to this Request for Proposals.
- G. **Bidders** may be asked to answer questions electronically during the review process of this Request for Proposals.
- I. All commitments made by the **Board** as a result of this Request for Proposals are contingent upon the availability of funds and the **Board** reserves the right to award an amount less than the total funds available.
- J. The **Board** assures it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the following laws: Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 law and the related regulations; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended.
- K. By providing a submittal to this Request for Proposals all **Bidders** are providing an assurance that they will comply with the above nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions.

- L. **Bidders** should note that under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, the contents of submittals to the **Board** is subject to public release upon request, except those items specifically exempt from disclosure. The **Bidder** shall mark as "proprietary" those parts of its submittal that it deems proprietary. However, the **Bidder** is alerted that this marking is advisory only and not binding on the **Board**. If there is a request under the Freedom of information Act (FOIA) to inspect any part of the submittal so marked, the **Board** will advise the **Bidder** and request further justification in support of the "proprietary" marking. If the **Board** determines, after receipt of the justification, that the material is releasable, the **Bidder** will be notified immediately. Under no circumstances will a submittal or any part of a submittal be released prior to the contract award decision.
- M. The **Board** will authorize the Administrative Entity to negotiate a contract and/or agreement for the provision of programs arising from this Request for Proposals.
- N. The successful **Bidder** is required to maintain a local management office within one of the comprehensive One-Stop Centers and provide detail on how each location will be staffed and managed.
- O. The successful **Bidder** may not subcontract any part of the services, unless approved in the Request for Proposals and/or approved in advance by the Local Administrative Entity and/or **Board**, if a conflict of interest exists.
- P. The successful **Bidder** must assure that it will comply with Local, State, and Federal program and fiscal monitoring requests.
- Q. **Bidders** are prohibited from discussing this Request for Proposals with **Board** Members, any retained contractor facilitating portions of the procurement process, or Local Chief Elected Officials. Such contact will result in disqualification of the response. A question period is provided within the Request for Proposals timeline.
- R. **Bidders** may protest the award of the contract according to the following process:
1. Protests must be filed electronically and be received by the **Board's** consultant, D. Webb, Webb Consulting at (mamadeb2484@yahoo.com) by **September 1, 2021**. All protests are public information after the protest period ends.
 2. All protests must state the basis for the protest in clear terms and provide an alternative the protester finds acceptable. The basis of the protest must be a violation of a State or Federal contracting law, rule, or regulation applicable to the contracting process.
 3. The **Board** consultant will forward all protests to the One-stop Committee and provide detail on whether the protests meet the above conditions.

4. During any part of the review or consideration, the protester may be asked to clarify or amplify statements or to provide proof of claims or other statements. Any such requests must be fully responded to within the time designated by the **Board** within the request. In the event a protester fails to respond, the protest will be dismissed and no further protest will be accepted relative to this Request for Proposals.
5. The **Board** will review the protest and will issue a written response that is intended as a complete and final answer to the protest. A response will be issued no later than September 14, 2021.
6. The Board Procurement Task Force will document the submission of a protest and the findings in meeting minutes and report its finding to the full **Board**.

Resource Information

Bidders may get helpful background information from the Transitional and Regional Local Plan provided to the State of Arkansas by the North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board. The plan can be found at <https://www.ncaworks.com/>.

Attachments to the Local Plan providing partner information and service locations can be found at <https://www.ncaworks.com/>.

The United States Department of Labor has a WIOA Online Community of Practice that provides information sharing needed to implement and maintain WIOA at: <http://on.workforcegps.org>.

WIOA law and regulations can be found at: www.doleta.gov/wioa/

Arkansas' WIOA Combined State Plan can be found at: https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/src/files/Arkansas_PYs_2020-2023.pdf

The current local Memorandum of Understanding and Resource Sharing Agreement will be revised to meet WIOA requirements once State guidance is provided. A copy of the current documents is at www.wrpdd.org.

RFP Timeline *(any changes to this schedule will be communicated electronically via email to bidding organizations.)*

- 8/01/21 Request For Proposals (RFP) Release advertised in Sunday Edition of Arkansas Democrat Gazette and posted on <https://www.ncaworks.com/> .
- 8/03/21 RFP Release advertised in Batesville Guard.
- 8/08/21 Second Request for RFP Release in Sunday Edition of Arkansas Democrat Gazette
- 8/10/21 Second Request for RFP Release in Batesville Guard.
- 8/12/21 Deadline for questions to Debbie Webb, Webb Consulting at mamadeb2484@yahoo.com .
- 8/16/21 Questions and Answers released and posted on <https://www.ncaworks.com/> .
- 8/23/21** RFP's due electronically to Debbie Webb at mamadeb2484@yahoo.com by 4:00 p.m., CSDST (Central Standard Daylight Savings Time).
- 8/27/21 One-Stop Operator Committee evaluation and recommendation to full **Board**.
- By
- 8/31/21 Full **Board** or Executive Committee approval and Chief Elected Official's approval.
- 8/31/21 Award announcement.
- 9/15/21 Negotiate and finalize contract.
- 10/1/21 Contract start date.

Eligible Applicants

Organizations eligible to respond to this Request for Proposals may fall within any of the following categories:

- Governmental Agencies
- Private Non-Profit Organizations
- Private For-Profit Businesses
- Educational Entities

One-Stop Operator Roles and Responsibilities

The One-Stop Operator must coordinate the service delivery of core and required one-stop partners and other partners working with the comprehensive Workforce Centers. This includes managing partner responsibilities in the comprehensive One-Stop Centers as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

WIOA was signed into law on July 22, 2014, and went into effect July 1, 2015. WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

WIOA has two tiers of partners: *Core Program Partners and Required Partners*.

The Core Program Partners are required to collaborate and participate in the One-Stop System include: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth; Wagner-Peyser labor exchange; Adult Education and Literacy; and, Vocational Rehabilitation. Core Program Partners are in the common performance measures pool and must work closely together to achieve success.

Required Program Partners must participate in the MOU process and provide coordinated services with the comprehensive Workforce Centers. Required Program Partners include the four Core Program Partners listed in the paragraph above, as well as: Career and Technical Education, Title V Older Americans, Job Corps, Native American Programs, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, Veterans, Youthbuild, Trade Act, Community Services Block Grant, HUD, Unemployment Compensation, Second Chance, and TANF. In the event any of the required partners do not have funding in the North Central Arkansas Local Workforce Development Area, their participation is waived.

Providing businesses with the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global, regional, and local economies is central to Arkansas' vision in implementing the Federal Act. Arkansas' workforce system provides a talent pipeline through the establishment of partnerships between State and local entities, businesses, economic development, education, and community stakeholders. To ensure that the workforce system efficiently meets the needs of both the businesses and the jobseekers that it serves, Arkansas workforce agencies have jointly developed the State's workforce plan with the intent that this vision is carried out in each of the Local Workforce Development Areas through their Workforce Centers.

The One-Stop Operator will be the point of contact regarding issues pertaining to customer complaints that are substantive to the required partners operating in the comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Centers. This will include convening partner meetings on a regular basis as well as stakeholder meetings including all core program partners and advising the Administrative Entity and Board Staff on partner operational challenges and successes.

In support of the WIOA MOU the One-Stop Operator responsibilities will also include:

- Coordinating service delivery among partners;
- Managing hours of operation at the comprehensive centers;
- Facilitating customer flow, customer service, initial assessment, resource room usage, tracking, and referral processes are carried out as agreed upon in the WIOA MOU;
- Communicating Board and Administrative policies and procedures to all partners; and
- Reporting to the Administration and Board on Center activities.

The One-Stop Operator will submit a written and verbal report on work accomplished and challenges encountered on a quarterly basis to the **Board**. In addition, the One-Stop Operator will gather data for the **Board** from the partners on a quarterly basis including: common measure information; tracking incoming clients; resource room usage; and program specific referrals as outlined in the WIOA MOU.

Business Services Lead Roles and Responsibilities

The focal point of the workforce system is business and industry. The Successful **Bidder** will be the lead and work with a local business services team comprised of partner agencies to provide business development and job development activities. These activities are taking place in North Central Arkansas and may include:

- **Access to Facilities** - use of Workforce Center facilities by a business for a variety of purposes such as meetings, trainings, orientations, interviews, etc.
- **Assessments** - any test or assortment of tests used to measure the skills, interests and/or personality traits of a job seeker, potential employee, or current employee.
- **Business Education** - seminars, round tables, workshops, focus groups, etc.
- **Business Information** - information given to a business pertaining to a variety of incentive programs or other information requested that provides a benefit to that business.
- **Hiring Events** - a customized event for a single employer that assists with recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of one or more positions.
- **Job Fairs** - event for multiple employers that assists with the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of one or more positions.
- **Job Postings** - staff-entered or web-entered job orders approved by staff.
- **Labor Market Information** - information on state and local labor market conditions, industries, occupations, and characteristics of the workforce, area business identified skills needs, employer wage and benefit trends, short and long-term industry and occupational projections, worker supply and demand, and job vacancies survey results.
- **Rapid Response** - a variety of services to businesses that are facing restructuring or downsizing including onsite workshops for employees in transition, job placement assistance, and information on unemployment benefits.
- **Screening** - any service that involves the initial evaluation of applications or resumes that assists the employer in the recruiting process.
- **Training and Retraining** - any service provided to a business that involves the training or retraining of current or future employees including on-the-job training, work experience, incumbent worker training, etc.

Submission Information and Requirements

General Submission Information

To be considered for funding, an eligible **Bidder** must submit this Request for Proposals (RFP) including supporting documentation in accordance with the instructions contained within this RFP. When evaluating a submittal, the Board Procurement Task Force will consider how well the **Bidder** has complied with these instructions and provided the required information. The Board Procurement Task Force reserves the right to request clarifications from any **Bidder** regarding information in their submissions and may request an oral presentation if deemed appropriate and necessary to make a final recommendation.

Bidders may request clarification to comply with instructions during the Question and Answer period August 2, 2021 through August 12, 2021 by emailing Debbie Webb at mamadeb2484@yahoo.com. The Board's Procurement Task Force will discuss and respond to all questions by August 16, 2021 and post the answers on <https://www.ncaworks.com/>.

Bidders shall not direct questions or have conversations regarding this Request for Proposals with any Board Members, Chief Elected Officials, the Consultant, or North Central Arkansas Board support staff except during the official "question" period. All questions must be communicated through Debbie Webb at mamadeb2484@yahoo.com. Questions submitted should be electronic and include in the subject line ***QUESTIONS - North Central Arkansas One-Stop Operator and Service Procurement***. Questions without the assigned subject line **will not** be considered.

The RFP submission, as well as any reference materials presented, must be typed in English in at least 12-point font and must be on standard portrait 8 ½" by 11" size with no less than one inch margins left and right and top and bottom. Landscape orientation containing charts, spreadsheets, and oversize exhibits is permissible. Submissions are limited to fifty (50) pages or less including attachments and supportive information on single side of paper.

Funding

Funding is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and is administered by White River Planning & Development District, Inc., on behalf of the Chief Elected Officials in North Central Arkansas in partnership with the State of Arkansas.

Compliance Requirements

Any award of a contract under this Request for Proposals will be subject to applicable requirements of the funding sources, including the U.S. Department of Labor, the State of Arkansas, and the North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board. These terms and conditions include, without limitation, provisions regarding reporting, insurance, indemnification, audits, nondiscrimination, minority and women's business enterprise requirements, veterans' priority of service, conflict of interest and local hiring provisions.

Available Funds Note

It is suggested that the successful **Bidder** has a minimum of three months operating capital on-hand throughout the term of the contract.

Public Records

Bidders are advised that documents in possession of the North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board are considered public records and subject to disclosure under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

Contractor Proposals and Responsibilities

All businesses/organizations must meet a minimum level of administrative and fiscal capacity in order to contract for the requested services. Therefore, the Successful Offeror must provide the following Documentation of Proposals within a ten-day period after notification. Failure to satisfactorily provide the following documentation could result in disqualification of proposed award.

Documentation for Organization's Proposals:

- Legal entity - Proof of Incorporation, 501(c) (3), etc., and designation from the IRS of tax-exempt status, if applicable. Must submit documents proving legal entity.
- Written personnel policies. Must submit Table of Contents of entity's personnel policies.
- Written Conflict of Interest Policy for staff and board. Must submit copy of entity's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Have an ongoing Quality Assurance Process for services. Must submit description of entity's process.
- For organizations that have more than one revenue source, must submit revenue documentation identifying the various sources and the amounts.
- Proven fiscal capacity including capacity for fund accounting. Must submit electronic copy of most recent formal audit completed within last year. Must satisfactorily address all findings. The Board reserves the right to request a bound hard copy of most recent audit completed. The organization's audit will not be counted in page limits for this RFP.
- Verify that the program has procured and will maintain during the life of the contract the following required insurance coverages: professional liability, errors and omissions; commercial general liability insurance, including contractual liability insurance; business automobile liability (if applicable); worker's compensation coverage; and employee dishonesty insurance. Successful **Bidder** must submit copies of certificate of insurance with contract.

RFP Content and Scoring

Proposals will be evaluated on Three Parts:

- Part I Required Format and Content
- Part II Qualifications, Experience & Approach (32 points)
- Part III Budget Detail, Staffing Structure and Alignment with Proposal (12 points)

The top three scores in **Part II** will move onto consideration and analysis of budget detail and proposed service levels.

Part I - All RFP submissions must contain the following documents in this order to be considered:

- a. Entire submission cannot exceed 50 (fifty pages), including attachments and must be single-sided.
- b. Title Page Including Entity, Contact Person(s) (emails, cell and telephone numbers, mailing and/or physical location address).
- c. Executive Summary (no longer than 2 pages, double spaced).
- d. History of the organization to include year entity established, mission statement and/or vision statement.
- e. Narrative (not to exceed 18 pages).
- f. Budget and Budget Justification/Narrative.
- g. Three references, dated and signed and on professional letterhead attesting to relevant experience. Scanned hard copy letters preferred which include references contact information (email and business/mobile telephone numbers).
- h. Supporting documentation/attachments.

Part II - Experience and Approach

Answer the following:

One-Stop Operator Services

- a. Provide complete organizational history, including mission and/or vision statements.
- b. Describe specific experience with providing One-Stop Operator services and any "lead" role the organization has had in regard to such services.
- c. Describe the role and responsibilities that will be undertaken as a One-Stop Operator or working with the WIOA Core Program Partners as integrated team.
- d. Describe a detailed description of proposed client flow to ensure Core Program Partners are included in upfront services and how the organization's approach to providing seamless services would be coordinated.
- e. Detail the proposed management and potential contents of the resource room.
- f. Provide detailed information for how staff and partner training will be provided.
- g. Provide information on experience the organization has in regard to One-Stop Certification achievement and maintenance.
- h. Describe how delivery system and Center orientations will be provided.

Part III - Budget, Budget Justification/Narrative, and Proposed Service Alignment (12 points)

Based on the information provided under the *Project Budget* section of this Request for Proposals, provide a detailed, itemized budget for service delivery. This budget and service delivery information will be used in the final determination of the successful **Bidder**. It is anticipated actual budget negotiations will take place once funding levels are confirmed with funding sources.

- A. Staffing details including time at each center and costs.
- B. Detailed Budget Justification/Narrative which includes operational expenses and overhead costs.
- C. Budget aligns with services to be provided as outlined in Proposed Narrative.