

# Request for Proposal

Online Career Counseling Curriculum and Experiences  
(Cecil and Harford Counties)



Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc.  
410 Girard Street  
Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078

Issue Date: Wednesday January 31, 2024

Bidder's Conference: Tuesday February 13, 2024

Due Date: Friday March 8, 2024, 4:00 pm

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Scope of Services

Purpose.....	2
Services to be Performed .....	2
General Conditions .....	3

## General Information

Organizational Background .....	5
Description of Activities .....	5

## Proposal Preparation

Format .....	5
Bidder’s Conference .....	5
Submission.....	6
Deadline .....	6

## Proposal Guidelines

Statement of Work .....	6
Background and Experience .....	6
Budget.....	6
References.....	6

## Evaluation Procedures

Criteria .....	7
Contract Negotiations and Award.....	7
Appeals Procedure .....	7

## Attachments

Proposal Cover Sheet.....	8
Assurance of Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity .....	9
Certification Regarding Lobbying .....	10
Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters.....	11
Certification of a Drug-Free Workplace .....	12

## I. SCOPE OF SERVICES

### A. Purpose

The Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc. (SWN) is soliciting proposals for a company to provide online resources for a Career Counseling curriculum for middle and high school students in Cecil and Harford Counties according to requirements set forth in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Susquehanna Workforce Network will provide in person career counseling for the students of Harford and Cecil County. Part of this effort will involve opportunities for students to independently explore potential careers, empower youth, foster a skilled workforce, and, ultimately, enrich Cecil and Harford Counties' economic prospects.

### B. Services to be performed

- 1) The vendor selected through this RFP will be expected to develop and implement a comprehensive program addressing the following key areas:
  - (a) **Student Engagement:** The program should foster active participation, motivation, and engagement among students, promoting an inclusive learning environment.
  - (b) **Identification of Student Strengths and Interests:** The program should have mechanisms to identify and nurture individual students' talents, strengths, and interests.
  - (c) **Cultivation of Opportunities and Relationships:** The program should cultivate relationships and opportunities for students to enter the workforce, providing safe, fully vetted exposure to various industries and potential career paths.
  - (d) **College and Career Readiness:** The program should equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about their post-secondary education and career paths.
  - (e) **Real-World Experiences/Simulations:** The program should offer safe real-world experiences or simulations designed to create a mindset of success and prepare students for future career challenges.
  
- 2) The vendor must also demonstrate the capability to provide the following:
  - (a) **Training and Support:** The proposer should be able to provide comprehensive training and ongoing support to career coaches who will be implementing the program.
  - (b) **Scale of Reach:** The proposer must be capable of serving up to 15,000 students in Middle and High School.
  - (c) **Engaging Lessons:** The program should include engaging, dynamic, and interactive lessons that stimulate students' interest in learning.
  - (d) **Accessibility:** The program should be accessible to multi-language learners, ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunity for all students.
  - (e) **Differentiated Activities:** The program should offer activities differentiated based on learning style and interest to cater to a diverse student population.
  - (f) **Internship/Service Opportunities:** The program should provide opportunities for internships in a safe environment and/or service learning to give students practical industry experience virtual or in person

- (g) . **Data and Progress Tracking:** The program should include a secure, confidential system for tracking students' data and progress, enabling educators to monitor student growth and program effectiveness over time.

The proposer should clearly articulate in their proposal how they will meet each of these requirements. Submissions should also include case studies, references, or other evidence demonstrating past success in these areas.

Proposers are encouraged to provide other factors and components/services not specifically mentioned above but are deemed appropriate to the purpose of the study.

3) Report Preparation, Analysis and Presentations:

The Report shall be written and presented with synthesized data and components cited above that interpret results on key findings, trends, issues, and assets. Six (6) printed copies and an electronic version of the completed report shall be provided, which can be printed and distributed as SWN sees fit for evaluation.

4) Additional Requirements

- a. The successful proposer should plan to meet with a local “steering committee” as needed to define further the scope of work, parameters, and final product preparation.
- b. Proposals should include a Work Plan and Staff Training opportunities including suggested timelines.
- c. The successful proposer will be expected to make staff available throughout the subsequent twelve months for assistance, to respond to questions, and to update staff as needed.

C. General Conditions

1. The release of this RFP does not constitute an acceptance of any offer, nor does such release in any way obligate the SWN to execute a contract with any offeror. The SWN reserves the right to accept, reject, or negotiate any or all offers received in response to this request, to negotiate with all qualified sources, or to cancel, reject, alter, modify, or amend in part or its entirety, this RFP, if to do so is the best interest of SWN.
2. The study will become the property of SWN; however, the developer shall retain the right to re-use the contents in subsequent projects.
3. The SWN will not be liable for any costs associated with the preparation of proposals or negotiation of contracts incurred by any offer.
4. All proposal prices are irrevocable for ninety (90) days following the closing date for submission.
5. All proposals, in their entirety, will become the property of SWN upon submission. Proposals will be exempt from disclosure until the evaluation and selection process has been completed. If a proposal contains any information that the offeror considers proprietary and does not want to be disclosed to the public or used for any purpose other than evaluation of the offer, all such information must be indicated with the following statement:  
“the information contained on pages \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ shall not be duplicated, used in whole or part for any purpose other than to evaluate the proposal provided that if a contract is awarded to this office as a result of or in connection with the submission of such information, the SWN has the right to duplicate, use, or disclose this information to the extent provided in the contract. This restriction does not limit the agency’s right to use information contained if obtained from another source.”
6. In submitting a proposal, the proposer certifies its legally constituted organization and that in connection with this proposal:

- The prices in the proposal have been arrived at independently without consultation, communication, or agreement to restrict competition as to any matter relating to such prices with any other offeror or with a competition; and,
  - Unless otherwise required by law, the prices which have been quoted in the proposal have not been knowingly disclosed by the proposer and will not knowingly be disclosed by the proposer before award directly or indirectly to any other proposer to any competition; and,
  - The proposer has not attempted to induce any other person or firm to submit a proposal to restrict competition.
7. Person(s) signing the proposal certify that person(s) in the offeror's organization who are legally responsible within that organization for the decision as to the price being offered in the proposal have not participated and will not participate in any action contrary to the above.
  8. SWN reserves the right to negotiate the final terms of all contracts with successful proposers. Items that may be negotiated include but are not limited to, the type and scope of services and activities, prices, and production schedules. Proposers must submit all revisions to their proposal that may result from negotiations before any agreement to contract. SWN also reserves the right to end contract negotiations if acceptable progress, as determined by the SWN, is not made within a reasonable time frame.

Likewise, SWN also reserves the right to accept any proposal submitted for contract award without substantive negotiation of offered terms, services, or prices. Therefore, proposers are advised to propose their most favorable terms initially.

9. If only one responsive proposal is received for activities described in the RFP, then SWN has the option to re-open the procurement or to initiate a sole source procurement process with the respective proposer.
10. The proposer will be required to assume full responsibility for all specified services and may subcontract only with the express written approval of the SWN.
11. Any information obtained concerning recipients of services through the SWN shall be treated as confidential by relevant provisions of State and Federal law.
12. Funding for contracts awarded as a result of this process shall be contingent on continued funding of the SWN through established sources. If such funding becomes unavailable for any reason, the contract would terminate immediately, and all payment obligations hereunder would cease forthwith, provided, however, that the Contractor would be paid for any services rendered before such termination. The SWN retains the right to terminate or reduce a contract in whole or in part if funds are not available.
13. Agencies or individuals selected to contract for services may be required to submit programmatic, financial, or other revisions of their proposal, which may have resulted from negotiations before the agreement to contract.
14. Responding agencies and individuals should be aware that SWN activities are subject to any modifications as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and its implementing regulations; the Maryland State Department of Labor, policies, procedures and directives; the SWN Workforce Plan; and compliance with nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, including the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act of 1991, 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, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, and with all applicable requirements imposed by or under regulations implementing those laws, including but not limited to 29 CFR part 34.

## II. GENERAL INFORMATION

### A. Organizational Background

The Susquehanna Workforce Network (SWN) is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation designated as the Workforce Board for the Susquehanna Region (Cecil and Harford Counties, Maryland) and the administrative entity for programs funded under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. SWN has been providing workforce services in Cecil and Harford Counties since 1983. The SWN is governed by a 31-member board comprised of representatives from education, community organizations, labor, economic development, the employment service, and a majority membership of business executives from throughout the region.

### B. Description of Activities

The SWN conducts workforce development activities designed to meet the needs of the region's job seekers and employers. Services to job seekers are provided at two Workforce Center locations. These services include access to computers for internet job search, resume preparation, or obtaining labor market information; assessment of reading and math skills; workshops on resume preparation and job search techniques and interviewing skills; postings of job openings with regional employers; and basic education and/or occupational skills training. Services to employers include workforce attraction assistance, outplacement assistance, applicant screening, incumbent worker training, and information on community and government resources available to the business community. SWN provides career coaching services including career assessment, career exploration, job search techniques, resume and interview preparation, information on career preparation and links to labor market information and job fairs.

## III. PROPOSAL PREPARATION

### A. Format

Responding organizations should ensure that proposals are prepared in compliance with the following requirements:

1. Please follow the guidelines using the headings for each section.
2. Emphasis should be placed on clarity of content.
3. Proposals must be limited to twelve (12) pages (not including attachments), typed, one side only, non-bound, with pages numbered.
4. Font style should be Times New Roman or similar, and font size should be no smaller than ten and no larger than 12.
5. The following attachments must be included:
  - Proposal Cover Sheet (Attachment I)
  - Assurance of Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity (Attachment II)
  - Certification Regarding Lobbying (Attachment III)
  - Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters (Attachment IV)
  - Certification of a Drug-Free Workplace (Attachment V)
6. Price proposals should be separate from statements of work and project descriptions.

### B. Bidder's Conference

A virtual Bidder's Conference will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. Proposers wishing to attend must contact Belinda Miller, [BMiller@SWNetwork.org](mailto:BMiller@SWNetwork.org) no later than Monday, February 12, 2024 at noon (12:00). Questions must be submitted in writing by email to [bmiller@swnetwork.org](mailto:bmiller@swnetwork.org) no later than Monday February 12, 2024 at noon (12:00).

Attendance is not mandatory, and anyone unable to attend may request a copy of the minutes and any materials distributed by contacting Belinda Miller by e-mail to [bmiller@swnetwork.org](mailto:bmiller@swnetwork.org).

C. Submission

One (1) signed original, five (5) copies, and one electronic version of each proposal must be submitted to the following address:

Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc.  
Attn: Kimberly Justus  
410 Girard Street  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

D. Deadline

Proposals must be received by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, March 8, 2024. No proposals will be accepted after the deadline date.

IV. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

A. Statement of Work

Discuss each required component, including potential services and activities the range of services proposed, and outline an estimated timeline for delivery (work plan). Identify specific tables, listings, and/or types of summaries and analyses that will be used.

B. Background and Experience

Describe the background/experience of the proposing individual or organization. Describe the location from which the work on this contract will be performed and the number and background of the professional staff assigned to these services.

C. Budget

All proposals should present a budget outlining specific dollar amounts assigned to proposed services.

D. References

Provide the name, address, and telephone number of three (3) recent clients for which similar tasks were performed.

V. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

A committee will evaluate proposals according to the requirements of this RFP. Proposals will first be evaluated for minimum requirements and those that do not meet minimum standards will be eliminated. Recommendations for contract award will be submitted to the SWN's Executive Committee for approval.

A. Criteria

The proposal will be awarded based on the following evaluation criteria:

	<u>Point Range</u>
1. Demonstrated Performance	
a. Responsiveness of Proposal (0 – 10)	
1) Clearly demonstrates an understanding of the work to be performed. Inclusion of innovative ideas and strategies.	0 – 5
2) Perceived ability to meet expressed needs in a reasonable manner. Realistic timetable; sensible work plan.	0 – 5
b. Technical Experience of Proposer (0 – 5)	
1) Experience and capability in performing the work of a similar nature.	0 – 5
2. Qualifications of Staff to be Assigned to the Project (0 – 5)	0 – 5
3) Safety and Security of students using product (0 – 5)	<u>0 – 5</u>
<i>Total Demonstrated Performance</i>	<i>0 – 25</i>
3. Price Criteria	<u>0 – 10</u>
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>0 – 35</b>

B.. Contract Negotiations and Award

Upon completion of the evaluation of the offeror's proposal and negotiation, if conducted, SWN shall award the contract to the responsible offeror whose offer is the most advantageous to the SWN. SWN reserves the right to reject all offers if it is determined to be in the best interest of the SWN.

C. Appeals Procedure

Any respondents dissatisfied with the SWN committee's recommendation and who seek to appeal the matter to the SWN Executive Committee must file a written appeal with the SWN Executive Director at the following address:

Ms. Kimberly Justus  
Executive Director  
Susquehanna Workforce Network, Inc.  
410 Girard Street  
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

All appeals must be filed within ten (10) calendar days of receiving notice of the committee's decision. The Executive Committee, at its discretion, will decide whether to grant the appellants an open hearing. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final.



SUSQUEHANNA WORKFORCE NETWORK

PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Name of Agency/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Total funds requested \_\_\_\_\_

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I do hereby certify that this proposal is submitted under the provisions and conditions outlined in the Request for Proposal issued on \_\_\_\_\_ for Labor Market Analysis for Cecil and Harford Counties, that all the information is complete and accurate, and that this proposal represents a firm and fixed offer to provide the requested services. This offer shall remain valid for a minimum of 90 days. I also certify that the fees in the proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation, communication, or agreement with any other proposer (except those in a collaborative proposal) or with any other competitor to restrict competition, as to any matter relating to such fees. No attempt has been made or will be made by the proposer to induce any other person or agency to submit or not submit a proposal to limit or restrict competition. I further certify that this agency can and will provide and make available, at a minimum, all services described in this proposal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Individual with Signatory Authority

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed name and title

ASSURANCE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

As a condition to the award of financial assistance under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the grant applicant assures, concerning operation of WIOA-funded programs or activities and all agreements or arrangements to carry out the WIOA-funded programs or activities, that it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, including the Nontraditional Employment for Women Act of 1991; 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; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1975, as amended; and with all applicable requirements imposed by or according to regulations implementing those laws, including, but not limited to, 29 CFR part 34.

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Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

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Name (typed) and Title

## CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

1. No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan or cooperative agreement.
2. If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form—LLL-A, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," following its instructions.
3. The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly.

This certification is a material representation of the fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by Section 1352, Title 31, US Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each failure.

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Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

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Name (typed) and Title

CERTIFICATION REGARDING  
DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS

This certification is required by the regulations implementing Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 29 CFR Part 98, Section 98.510, Participants Responsibilities. The regulations were published as Part VII of the May 26, 1988 Federal Register.

1. The proposer certifies, to the best of its knowledge and belief, that it and its officers/principals:
  - a. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal, State or local governmental department or agency;
  - b. Have not been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes or commission or embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;
  - c. Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a government entity (Federal, State, or local) with the commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (1)(b) of this certification; and
  - d. Have not had one or more public transactions (Federal, State, or local) terminated for cause or default.
2. Where the proposer cannot certify any of the statements in this certification, such proposer shall attach an explanation to this proposal.

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Signature of Authorized Representative

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Date

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Name (typed) and Title

## CERTIFICATION OF A DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

By submission of this offer, the proposer certifies and agrees that concerning all employees of the proposer to be employed under a contract resulting from this solicitation, it will:

1. Publish a statement notifying such employees that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the Contractor's workplace and specifying the actions that will be taken against employees for violations of such prohibition.
  2. Establish a drug-free awareness program to inform such employees about:
    - the dangers of drug abuse in the workplace;
    - the Contractor's policy of maintaining a drug-free workplace;
    - any available drug counseling, rehabilitation, and employee assistance programs; and
    - the penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug violations occurring in the workplace.
  3. Provide all employees engaged in the performance of the contract with a copy of the statement in item 1 of this provision.
  4. Notify such employees in the statement required by item 1 of this provision that as a condition of continued employment on the contract resulting from this solicitation, the employee will:
    - abide by the terms of the statement; and
    - notify the employer of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace no later than five (5) days after such conviction.
  5. Notify the contracting officer within ten (10) days after receiving notice under item 4 of this provision, from an employee or otherwise, of such conviction.
  6. Within thirty (30) days after receiving notice under item 4 of this provision of a conviction, impose the following sanctions or remedial measures on any employee who is convicted of drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace:
    - take appropriate personnel action against such employee, up to and including termination; or
    - require such employee to satisfactorily participate in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a Federal, State or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.
  7. Make a good faith effort to maintain a drug-free workplace by implementing items 1 through 6 of this provision.
- Our organization has a Drug-Free Workplace policy.
- Our organization does not have a Drug-Free Workplace policy.

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Signature/Title of Authorized Representative

Date