Request for Proposals (RFP)

RFP Title: IT Workforce Development Training Provider

Issue Date: May 15, 2024

Proposals Due: June 7, 2024, 5 p.m. EDT

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1. General Information

The Kentucky Capital Development Corporation (KCDC), the quasi-governmental economic development arm of the City of Frankfort and Franklin County, Kentucky, is seeking proposals from qualified technology training firms to develop and provide a customized information technology full-stack software engineer workforce training program with emphasis on cyber security and other critical elements of software development for residents of Frankfort/Franklin County as further described in this Request for Proposals (RFP). The purpose of this RFP is to provide interested firms or agencies the project objectives and goals as well as the submittal guidelines and evaluation criteria.

2. Background

KCDC was awarded Community Project Funding through the United States Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to develop and implement the Capital Bridges to Workforce Development Program (CBWD). The purpose of the CBWD is to develop career opportunities for low-income individuals, particularly minorities and women, in the IT, software engineering, application development, and cybersecurity sectors through classroom instruction and on-the-job training. KCDC was awarded $440,000 to design and implement this program.

KCDC seeks and expects to conduct all business and efforts under the CBWD in compliance with the requirements of the grant which funds the program and extends this expectation to any awarded partners under this RFP.

3. Project Description and Scope

Workforce shortages exist for almost every position within information technology (IT), and specifically in software development and cybersecurity. Research continues to highlight the desperate shortage of people who can design secure systems, write safe computer code, and create the tools needed to prevent, detect, mitigate, and reconstitute from damage due to system failures and malicious acts. Workforce training programs can provide a base of skills that, when combined with an opportunity for on-the-job training, can create career opportunities without the length of time or cost of a college degree or that can enhance the prospects of job seekers with a college degree. As the demand for tech talent continues to increase, building tech talent at scale, through programs like CBWD, will provide Kentucky employers with a larger talent pool to tap into for their own staffing and sustainability needs.

KCDC is partnering with an HBCU, Kentucky State University, to develop a certification program that will provide IT education to residents. This immersive 12-week training program will provide a cohort of 25 non-traditional students with in-depth instruction in a breadth of web development skills enabling them to build full stack web applications with React and Java. Students will graduate with a solid base of fundamental programming knowledge, experience with specific languages and frameworks, and a flexible outlook that is comfortable and eager to tackle new technologies in a fast-moving and ever-changing industry. These network essentials, security fundamentals, and troubleshooting will provide the students with the coding skills they need to make their start as junior-level software developers. With a focus on diversity and inclusion, the program will provide traditionally overlooked individuals with the opportunity to develop foundational coding and programming skills.

Outcomes will include the ability to create scalable single page applications with React/Redux and connect them to back-end API's they develop using Java and Spring Boot. The selected WTP will provide 120 hours of Front-end development, learn how to build responsive websites with HTML and CSS frameworks. They will leverage JavaScript to create highly interactive websites. The course will provide 200 hours of Java programming language to create scalable web applications with the Spring Boot framework. They will learn the React and Redux approach to building performance and scalable single page applications. They will manage the State within the React applications and respond to user actions in a maintainable way.

Following the classroom training, students will enter a registered apprenticeship program, approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. The apprenticeship will be in Franklin County or fully remote. As apprentices, individuals will be placed in year-long engagements as full-time employees, earning competitive wages and benefits, while benefiting from continuous on-the-job-learning as a junior software developer. With a certificate from Kentucky State

University, 12 credit hours in computer science, and 12 months on-the-job experience, graduates will be prepared to enter the IT industry in entry-level positions.

KCDC is seeking an organization to provide this KSU accredited training program including in–depth instruction, customizable to fit the needs of the employer(s) who will employ the apprentices after the training program is complete. The successful workforce training provider will offer instructional programming designed to develop technical, business, and workforce readiness skills to address the talent and diversity gap in the information technology and cyber security-related industries.

It is anticipated that a successful cohort will have at least 70 percent of participating students graduate, and 85 percent of those placed in entry-level apprenticeships.

4. Proposal Requirements

This RFP is to select a Workforce Training Partner (WTP) for the CBWD program. The WTP will provide their expertise and leverage their past successes to coordinate the delivery of educational content in collaboration with Kentucky State University (KSU) and apprenticeship opportunities, through the WTP's employer partner, as approved by the KCDC.

The program consists of three phases:
- Candidate Selection
- Classroom Instruction
- Apprenticeship

Candidate Selection

The WTP will partner with the employer(s) to target and recruit 25 economically challenged individuals, particularly women and minorities, for skills training and apprenticeship. Candidates must be high school graduates and residents of Franklin County, Kentucky.

Candidate selection will be conducted, at a minimum, via the internet, in person and through workforce partners. Tools used in recruitment should consider the targeted candidates and how best to connect with them. Outreach should leverage sourcing practices such as organizational outreach, social media campaign(s), targeted geo-fencing, as well as television and radio advertising. The WTP will work with the employer(s) to manage the admissions process, including sourcing, assessing, and evaluating candidates and must be considerate of the target audience for the program (underserved communities, minorities and women).

Classroom Instruction

KSU's accreditation to classroom instruction, via Certificate and 12-hours of College Credit earned, will require the WTP to share detailed curricula and desired learning outcomes. In

addition, the selected WTP will work closely with KSU to provide instructor credentials, and train on the BlackBoard educational software to ensure compliance with University standards. Ultimately coursework will include educational content that will transform non-technical or entry-level IT helpdesk personnel into job-ready Junior Software Developer/Junior Software Engineer.

The coursework is 40 hours per week (2-3 hours per night of homework) and 12 weeks in duration. Applicants for the program will be screened for final selection by the WTP. The program is at no cost to the student. Students who successfully complete the course will earn 12 college credits.

Apprenticeship

The WTP will work with an employer partner to secure full-time, 12 month paid, DOL registered apprenticeships in junior software development/IT for students who have successfully completed the 12-week course. Apprentices may be employed by the WTP however, the WTP may not profit from the apprentices, in compliance with the grant requirements.

The WTP will provide program graduates with ongoing training in professionalism, communications, business acumen and workforce readiness skills during the 12-month apprenticeship.

Content of Submittal Responses

Submittals should demonstrate the applicant's expertise and capability to provide training and apprenticeship opportunities as indicated in Section 5 Evaluation Criteria and Process. Responses should include:

- **A written description of the proposed approach to the project**
  Include a work program detailing tasks to be performed, timeline and budget for each task. Budget should be broken down into categories (e.g. marketing, recruitment, course development, instruction, employer recruitment, apprenticeship placement, monitoring, project management, etc.) and may include stipends for the students or partial salary for the apprenticeships.

- **Qualifications of the team assembled to carry out the work**
  Brief description of general qualifications, relevant experience and a listing of key personnel that would be available to work on this project.

- **A list of comparable projects undertaken by the team**
  Summary of workforce training and apprenticeship projects in progress or completed, with the following information for each:

  - Reference name and contact information

- Current status
- Client type
- Success Outcomes (i.e., % of successful completion, % of job placement, etc.)

- **Cost Proposal**
  A cost proposal detailing cost of the work and requested payment terms. Respondents should also include their unique entity identifier from SAM.gov.*****

  The successful response will detail the relationships between the WTP and the movement of funding between the KCDC, WTP, apprentices, and partner employers to ensure KCDC's grant compliance.

  *See section 5 for instructions for obtaining a unique entity identifier (UEI). Note the UEI is not required for submission but must be able to be obtained for the contract to be awarded.

5. Evaluation Criteria and Process

This section describes the evaluation process used to determine which proposal provides the greatest benefit to Frankfort/Franklin County. KCDC will evaluate proposals using the criteria described below with a maximum of 100 points for each proposal. KCDC reserves the right to conduct discussions with firms determined to be in the best interest of the City/County. KCDC may, in its sole and absolute discretion, accept or reject, in whole or in part, for any reason whatsoever any or all proposals; re-advertise this RFP; postpone or cancel at any time the proposal process; waive any informalities of or irregularities in the process; negotiate with any party or request additional information if it so desires. Proposals that are not submitted on time or do not conform to KCDC's requirements will not be considered. In all cases, KCDC shall have no liability to any contractor for any costs or expense incurred in connection with this proposal or otherwise.

Those responding to this RFP must demonstrate the following:

- Experience in workforce training and apprenticeship/employment placements
- Experience in administering federal grants and a clear understanding of the requirements and restrictions of federal grant funding
- An understanding of the project's unique opportunities and potential challenges
- Respondents are required to create a unique entity identifier in SAM.gov. Respondents are not required to complete full SAM registration to obtain a unique entity identifier. The successful respondent cannot be awarded a contract until they have obtained a unique entity identifier as described above.

Note: please refer to section § 25.300 for more information. Requirement for recipients to ensure subrecipients have a unique entity identifier. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-25.300

All respondents must possess all applicable federal, state, and local qualifications and license to provide the services in Frankfort and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

6. Submittal Instructions

- **Questions and Addenda.** Respondents should seek clarification of any ambiguity, conflict, omission, or other error in this RFP in writing to the contact listed in this RFP. No oral statement or communications shall modify or otherwise affect the terms, conditions, or specifications stated in the RFP or ensuing contract. If the answer materially affects this procurement, the information will be issued in an addendum. All addenda to this RFP must be applied in the proposal submitted to KCDC. Failure to use the correct and most recent addenda may result in the proposal being rejected. In the case of a discrepancy, the answers provided will govern over all other RFP documents.

   Any addendum issued shall not be interpreted to relieve Respondents of their authority and duty to comply with applicable federal, state or local laws, regulations or policies.

   Written communications should be sent to:

   Kentucky Capital Development Corporation
   Attention: Penny Peavler
   109 Consumer Lane
   Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
   ppeavler@kycapitaldevelopment.com

- **Submittal of Proposals.** Respondents must submit four (4) original proposals in a sealed envelope plainly marked on the outside "SEALED PROPOSAL FOR CAPITAL BRIDGES TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM" and one (1) electronic copy in PDF format sent to ppeavler@kycapitaldevelopment.com. No proposals will be accepted after the time and date proposals are due.

- **Right to Reject.** KCDC reserves the right to reject all proposals received in response to this RFP and to waive any informality in this RFP. The award of a contract shall be at the sole discretion of the KCDC.

- **Retention of Records.** The successful respondent shall be required to maintain, for a period of five (5) years from the date of final payment to the respondent, all books and records pertaining to this RFP, the contract and contract administration.

- **Conflicts, Gratuities, and Kick-Backs Prohibited.** KCDC adheres to the provisions of KRS 45A.455, paragraphs (1) through (5) relative to conflicts of interests, gratuities, kickbacks, and use of confidential information in all proposals.

- **Cost Incurred in Responding.** This RFP does not commit KCDC to pay any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals or in making necessary studies or designs, nor does it commit KCDC to enter into a contract.

- **Disposition of Proposals.** All materials submitted in response to this proposal offering will become the property of KCDC. One (1) copy of each proposal shall be retained for the official files and will become a public record after an award is made by KCDC, and thus open for public inspection. It is understood that the proposal will become a part of the official file without obligation on the part of KCDC.

- **Written Agreement.** The successful bidder upon selection, will be required to enter into a written agreement with KCDC and KSU.

- **Compliance Requirements.** The RFP, the evaluation and selection of the successful candidate, the final agreement and the performance of the contract shall all be in compliance with all state, federal, local and KCDC requirements.

- **Disclosure.** In compliance with Kentucky Open Records Act, trade secrets or proprietary information submitted by a respondent in connection with this RFP shall not be subject to public disclosure. However, the respondent must invoke this protection prior to or upon submission of the data or other materials and must clearly identify the specific area or scope of data or other materials to be protected and state the reasons why protection is necessary.