



## Human Centered Design Request for Proposal (RFP)

### **SECTION I. Purpose, Performance Period, Funding, and Schedule**

#### **A. Purpose**

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) has placed a priority on service integration—a combination of strategies to align and simplify access to One-Stop Career Center services and supports for employers, job seekers, and system customers with the goal of providing the best experience possible. Pursuant to this objective, the partners of the North Suburban Cook County American Job Center (the AJC) and the LWIB, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (the Partnership) recently completed a rigorous service integration self-assessment. The collaborative assessment examined levels of service integration across seven functional areas of service integration. An outcome of the assessment was to establish action priorities to promote service integration within the AJC. Four action priorities were identified by the partners as a result of the self-assessment:

- Developing better methods to gather and synthesize customer experience information to drive improvements in service design,
- Improving the referral and tracking process between partners and other human service agencies,
- Designing a systematic approach to cross training, and
- Using customer input to inform the design of a new AJC site.

Through the PY'19 WIOA Statewide Workforce Innovation Program, the AJC partners leveraged support to carry out these action priority objectives. The AJC partners are issuing this RFP to identify a consultant with workforce development experience to provide a human centered design (HCD) solution for the North Suburban Cook County American Job Center.

A project team comprising the AJC partners' leadership, the Partnership, and the Partnership's designated one-stop operator (OSO) will direct and actively participate in project activities which will include: selection of the HCD consultant; development of the project plan; thorough evaluation of the AJC customer experience; identification of areas for improvement and the application of HCD principles; designation of design teams; implementation of techniques to elicit customer information to drive improvement efforts; application of HCD methodology to address the action priorities and others identified through the course of the project; development, implementation, and testing of prototypes; and development and continued refinement of solutions.

The project will result in innovative human-centered design solutions for the action priorities designated during the service integration self-assessment, as well as other areas identified during continued self-evaluation. Perhaps even more importantly, the project is intended to be self-sustaining, as a primary objective will be for AJC partners to learn how to incorporate HCD design principles into every aspect of the AJC so it is engrained as a routine business practice.



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### B. Performance Period

The period of performance begins on November 1, 2020 and concludes on December 31, 2021.

### C. Funding

BCS anticipates releasing \$85,000 through this RFP to fund one entity to carry out the scope of work identified in this RFP from November 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021.

The successful respondent to this RFP will enter into a grant agreement with Business and Career Services, Inc. (BCS). Final agreements will be subject to any changes in legislation, regulations, or policies promulgated by the federal or state funders. BCS reserves the right to vary or change the terms of any agreement executed as a result of this RFP, including funding levels, scope of services, performance standards, and contract terms, as it deems necessary.

### D. Schedule

Release of RFP .....	September 1, 2020
Question Submittal Deadline .....	September 15, 2020
Posting of Questions and Answers .....	September 21, 2020
Proposal Submittal Deadline .....	October 1, 2020
Proposal Review .....	October, 2020
Selection Review .....	October, 2020
Anticipated Contract Commencement .....	November 1, 2020

## **SECTION II. Eligible Respondents**

Any entity that can sufficiently demonstrate the required knowledge and expertise outlined in this RFP. Consultants with experience in the public workforce development are preferred. Additionally, entities must satisfy the following criteria to be considered eligible respondents to this RFP:

- 1) Entities must operate in accordance with Federal, State, and local law;
- 2) Entities must be currently eligible to do business with the Cook County, including the City of Chicago, and the State of Illinois;

Entities are **ineligible** to respond to this RFP if they: 1) are currently barred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by a Federal, State, County or City department/agency, quasi-governmental agency (Such as the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership), or Business and Career Services; 2) have existing grants with any Federal, State, County or City agency that have been suspended or



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otherwise deemed not in good standing within the past two (2) years; or 3) are not in compliance with the State Department of Revenue, Federal Internal Revenue Service or Federal Office of Management and Budget requirements.

### **SECTION III. Background and Overview of the local workforce area and AJC**

#### **A. Overview of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership)**

Created in 2012, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is an umbrella organization operating the public workforce system in the City of Chicago and Cook County. The Partnership combines federal and philanthropic resources to broaden the reach and impact of workforce development services for both employers and job seekers. The Partnership has programmatic and administrative responsibility for all WIOA services provided in Chicago and Cook County (Illinois LWIA 7).

The Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board, which oversees The Partnership, has statutory responsibility for the local implementation of WIOA and provides a forum for business, labor, education, government, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to collaboratively develop strategies that address the supply and demand challenges confronting the local workforce. The WIB, together with The Partnership, provides leadership, strategic planning, policy direction, and oversight for WIOA services in LWIA 7.

The Partnership administers a comprehensive workforce development system with multiple entry points where job seekers and businesses can access the full range of WIOA services and benefits. The backbone of this system is the 10 American Job Centers (AJCs) located throughout Chicago and suburban Cook County. These are high-capacity program sites serving the general job-seeking population as well as businesses. AJCs must serve both Adult and Dislocated Workers (Youth optional) and must have active participation from the Core WIOA Partners

#### **B. Overview of WIOA and the One-Stop Delivery System**

Signed into law on July 22, 2014 and funded by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act supports workforce development programs throughout the nation in service of job seekers and businesses. WIOA helps job seekers access employment, education, training, and supportive services needed to succeed in the labor market; and businesses find the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity administers WIOA funding for the State of Illinois, and in turn delegates the implementation and administration of WIOA to local workforce boards and their administrative agencies.

Pursuant to 20 CFR 678.300(b), WIOA Title I assigns responsibilities at the local, state, and federal level for creating and maintaining a “one-stop delivery system” (One-Stop system) that enhances the range and quality of education and workforce development services that employers



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and individual customers can access. The common identifier for this One-Stop system is “American Job Center” (AJC).

The U.S. Department of Labor envisions a WIOA One-Stop system that is quality focused, employer driven, customer centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies. It is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment. The system aligns workforce development, education, and economic development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers, and provide a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system.

This vision for the One-Stop system is accomplished locally through the creation of high-quality One- Stop centers that connect customers with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are individuals pursuing employment, career advice, education, or occupational training; or are businesses in search of skilled workers. High-quality One-Stop centers are characterized by:

- Excellent customer service provided to job seekers, workers, and businesses;
- Innovative and effective service design; and
- Integrated management systems and high-quality staffing.

The required partners in the One-Stop delivery system (WIOA One-Stop Partners) administer separately funded programs as a set of integrated streamlined services to customers. A Memorandum of Understanding, negotiated and executed between the local workforce development board and the WIOA One-Stop Partners with the agreement of the chief elected official(s), governs the operation of the One-Stop delivery system in the LWIA.

As identified in Section 121(b)(1)(B) of WIOA, the required partners in the One-Stop delivery system are the entities responsible for administering the following programs and activities in the local area:

PROGRAMS	AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION
Career services for Adults, Dislocated Workers, & Youth	WIOA Title I-B
Job Corps; Youth Build; Native American programs; Migrant & Seasonal	WIOA Title I
Adult education & literacy services	WIOA Title II
Employment services	Wagner-Peyser Act, amended by WIOA Title III



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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Rehabilitation Act, amended by WIOA Title IV
Senior Community Service Employment Program (CSEP)	Older Americans Act
Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the post-secondary level	Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) activities	Trade Act
Programs under Jobs for Veterans State Grants	
Employment & training activities under Community Services Block Grant	
Employment & training activities carried out by Department of Housing & Urban Development	
Employment programs	State unemployment compensation laws
Reentry programs	Second Chance Act
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Social Security Act

Programs authorized or amended under WIOA Titles I-B, II, III, and IV are Core Programs and their administrators in the local area are Core Partners of the One-Stop system (WIOA Core Partners).

The Partnership administers a comprehensive One-Stop delivery system with multiple entry points where job seekers and businesses can access the full range of WIOA services and benefits. The system includes 10 One-Stop centers, a.k.a. American Job Centers, which form the backbone of the system and have active participation from the Core WIOA Partners.

### **One-Stop Operator**

The role of the One-Stop Operator (OSO) for Local Workforce Innovation Area 7 is to work in collaboration with The Partnership to coordinate service delivery among the WIOA One-Stop Partners. The Partners provide job seekers and employers with information and services to positively impact educational, employment, and business outcomes. The collective goal is to consistently offer seamless services to their shared job seekers and employers.

Starting in PY'20 the Partnership is changing the existing structure. A highly qualified, neutral



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entity has been designated to coordinate services among the various required One-Stop partners (WIOA One-Stop Partners) present at the 10 existing One-Stops in its workforce system resulting in more streamlined and integrated services for job seeker and business customers. The OSO will play an integral role in project activities. Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition (<http://www.chicagocitywideliteracy.org/>) been selected to carry out this important function in the Cook County workforce system and is expected to assume this role in October 2020. A detailed discussion of the role of the OSO and its scope of work can be found in the Partnership's RFP for a One-Stop Operator at <https://chicookworks.org/request-for-proposal-one-stop-operator/>

### North Suburban Cook County American Job Center

The North Suburban Cook County American Job Center currently located in Arlington Heights is one of ten Cook County AJCs designated by the Partnership. Its primary service area is north and northwest suburban Chicago, a roughly 200 square mile area, comprising 34 municipalities with a population of approximately 1 million residents. More information about the AJC can be found at its website: <https://www.northcookjobcenter.com/>.

### *Project Team*

A project team has been designated to carry out the activities and objectives described in this RFP. Team members represent the core partners of the AJC. However, it is expected that the broader group of required partners will participate in the project activities. Core project team members include:

- Title I: Business and Career Services, Inc. (BCS)
- Title II: Harper College, Township High School Districts 211 & 214, Oakton Community College
- Title III: Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)
- Title IV: Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
- Representatives of the Partnership and One-Stop Operator

Project Team members have extensive experience their fields, are well known within their systems, and have been actively involved in the evolving mission of the AJC. They are committed to the principle of service integration and improvement of services. The AJC project team will guide all aspects of the project from planning, procurement, project activities, evaluation, and, as necessary, participate in forums to discuss lessons learned and how best practices developed might be applied on a statewide basis.

BCS, the Title I service provider, is the grant recipient and will assume the role of contact administrator for the project.



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### C. Service Integration Self-Assessment Process and its Goals

As stated at the onset, AJC partners participated in a rigorous self-assessment as part of a statewide service integration initiative. Participation in the Service Integration Self-Assessment was an extremely meaningful exercise for all partners who engaged in this effort, and produced valuable insights into the present state of affairs and a vision for the future. Among the findings were that despite years of working together in a collaborative fashion and the best intentions of all the partners to move toward an integrated system, significant areas of isolation, with some degree of communication or coordination, were identified across the seven functional areas assessed. To be sure, many instances of collaboration do exist, but these were often ad hoc adjustments made to address a discrete programmatic need rather than a routine way of doing business.

In addition, although partner management meets regularly and enjoys collegial relationships, little interaction occurs at the staff level between the various partners. This is a critical finding as the essence of integration is really most impactful at the staff level where customers are served. It was clear that partner staff needed better information about services available throughout the system and better methods to make these services available to their customers. Similarly, it was evident that most service structures were designed from the point of view of the agency or organization providing that service to meet programmatic mandates, rather than a complete understanding of the customers' needs.

To begin to address these issues, the partners identified four priority action steps as an initial launch point to move toward more service integration:

1. Developing better methods to gather and synthesize customer experience information to drive improvements in service design.

Surveys are used in the AJC, and aside from an occasional complaint, most customer feedback has generally been positive. However, the current tool being used provides little in the way of actionable information that can be used to drive improvements in service design. Partners agreed that it was imperative to develop better tools and methods to elicit more meaningful customer need information as a basis upon which to develop integration strategies.

2. Develop a systematic approach to cross training.

While cross-training has been provided intermittently, it has not been conducted as a systematic routine business practice. Regularly scheduled and on-going cross trainings will help familiarize employees of all partner organizations about the service offerings and requirements of the systems' programs and services and how their customers can



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benefit from these offerings. Cross-trainings provided in a setting whereby representatives from multiple organizations attend a session will provide opportunities to network among frontline staff resulting in working relationships and a forum to identify areas for collaboration.

3. Improving the referral and tracking process between partners and other human service agencies.

Over the course of the years a variety of methods, including electronic and paper systems, have been employed, with varying levels of success, to make and track referrals between workforce system partners and other human service agencies. Often these systems fell into disuse because they were cumbersome, required duplicate data entry, or were not understood by the employees making the referrals. With the renewed commitment to the service integration goal and better cross-training, the need for an effective, easy to use, customer-based referral system is a priority to promote coordinated service delivery.

4. Physical Design of the American Job Center

After more than 30 years at the same location, the North Suburban Cook County American Job Center in Arlington Heights is faced with the prospect of having to move due to redevelopment in the area. This provides the AJC partners with a rare opportunity to design a center from the ground up. At the time the Center was established in the mid 1990's with the implementation of WIA, the usual practice in Illinois was to use existing spaces and add on one-stop components. As a result, the AJC, among the largest, highest volume, and highest performing operations of its kind in the state maintains the look, the feel, and the perception of the "Unemployment Office". The AJC partners hope to seize upon the opportunity of the pending relocation, slated to occur within the next year, to design a physical site that is welcoming, professional, and "employment" oriented and meets the needs of the customers it serves.

The service integration self-assessment and identification of action priorities were conducted prior to the onset of the global pandemic. Obviously the environment in which the local workforce system and the world at large operate has changed dramatically over the course of the last several months. While services continue to be provided through virtual methods, offices are currently closed to the public and most staff are working remotely. The current circumstances have posed challenges to the individual organizations comprising the workforce system; these challenges are compounded in the inter-organizational framework. In the best of times, service integration and collaboration are essential and worthwhile pursuits. In the current environment, these efforts, although more challenging to execute, may be even more critical to the effective and efficient functioning of a workforce system at a time when public demand for the services it provides are at its peak.



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The newly designated OSO will be an integral part of this project and will be helping to standardize service levels and service integration across the Cook County AJC system. The intent is that lessons learned and processes developed can be applied system wide.

### **SECTION IV. SCOPE OF WORK**

To achieve the stated objectives, the AJC Partners anticipate the consultant's Project Plan to include the following components:

1. Professional Development Training in Human-Centered Design Training for AJC partner management and staff.
2. Establishment of Interagency Design Teams and coaching teams to implement HCD processes
3. Assessment of the AJC customer experience
4. Report of assessment findings and identification/prioritization of areas to be addressed through the application of the HCD process
5. Systematic Gathering of Customer Information
6. Prototyping, testing, and implementation of solutions
7. Documentation, Best Practices, Evaluation, and Guide for System-wide Implementation

#### *Professional Development Training*

The consultant will be tasked with conducting an Introduction to Human-Centered Design training to AJC partner management and staff. An overview of the HCD approach, its impact on service and process design, and how it will be implemented in the AJC will be incorporated into the introductory session. Interagency Design Teams will be established, and will receive more in-depth hands-on training and coaching through each process of the design, prototype, implementation, testing phase. The Design Teams will be tasked with assessing the AJCs current customers' experiences with people, processes, facilities, policy, data, and technology. Generally, each Design Team will consist of a diverse group of managers and staff, selected by the AJC project team, who will spend approximately 10–15 hours per month over the first 4 months of the project using HCD methods to assess processes, customer experience, develop, implement and refine solutions.

#### *Assessment*

Analyze all components of AJC's current customer experience (i.e. people, process, facilities, policy, data and technology) to assess challenges and opportunities for a human-centered design approach. While this phase will include an examination the four action priorities identified during the service integration self- assessment, this assessment will have a broader scope and identify areas ripe for the application of HCD methodology in the short-term. It is likely that such components as orientation and business service integration, and others will be included in this assessment and be addressed.



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### *Systematic gathering of customer data*

Establishing more effective methods to elicit customer need information was identified as an action priority during the service integration self-assessment. The foundation of the HCD approach is the collection and synthesis of customer data. The focus of this component will be to build a framework that integrates a set of practices to understand users—their needs, constraints, contexts, behaviors, and wants so that the project team can build deep empathy with them, generate multiple ideas to help their problems, and arrive at a solution via rapid prototyping. In addition to traditional methods of customer data gathering such as surveys, focus groups, and secret shopping the consultant will perform and train AJC partners to conduct more in-depth methods to elicit customer needs. Examples of such methods and techniques might include:

- **Empathetic observation** relies on observation of consumers as opposed to traditional market research which relies on consumer inquiry. With the intention to avoid possible biases in surveys and questions, it minimizes the chance that consumers will provide false information.
- **Customer Journey Mapping** tells the story of the customer's experience: from initial contact, through the process of engagement and into a long-term relationship. It may focus on a particular part of the story or give an overview of the entire experience.
- **Behavioral insights** are the application of insights from social science research that account for the fact that people behave in irrational but predictable ways. Even small program or service features, such as minor hassle factors, the complex presentation of information, and the number and sequencing of choices can lead people not to choose at all, choose poorly, or not follow through on good choices. An abundance of recent applied research shows that applying insights to labor programs, communications, and engagement methods can have remarkable results in improving program take-up, engagement, and follow-up rates, freeing up limited staff resources and helping achieve outcomes.

As an essential part of this engagement, the consultant will teach staff how to perform behavioral audits, journey mapping and other methods to elicit actionable customer information to identify service features that may be leading to poor client outcomes and identify low-cost areas for improvement. The goal of this phase is to teach partners to regularly use customer feedback to design, implement, and improve all aspects of service delivery.

### *Referral System:*

The development of improved and more effective referral processes was another identified action priority. A key project activity will be to evaluate the referral process to develop strategies for improving the collaboration between the AJC core and required partners and other human service systems, to include better tracking mechanisms and feedback loops.



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Developing a system wide referral and tracking system will be integral part of the designated One-Stop Operator's scope of work. It is expected that the consultant work with the OSO to design a referral and tracking framework that can be used system wide.

### *Cross-Training.*

The consultant will review the cross-training process recently launched to address the service integration action priority. With a focus on the employee as customer, HCD methodology will be used to improve the cross-training process to ensure staff and management are adequately trained on a continuing basis, training becomes part of the on-boarding process for all new AJC partner employees, and the experience results in the development of inter-organizational relationships at the staff level to facilitate such improvements as coordinated career plans. Cross training will also focus on the employees' role in the HCD initiative. A major thrust of this project will be to improve the employee experience, engage them as members of design teams, provide them with more input and ownership of internal processes, and identify as members of the AJC rather than solely employees of the constituent organizations.

### *Physical Space*

As described earlier, after more than 30 years at the same location, the North Suburban Cook County AJC is faced with the prospect of having to relocate its site due to commercial redevelopment occurring in the area. This presents the AJC with a rare opportunity to develop a center using HCD principles. The consultant will work with the Design Team tasked with this activity to help them understand how to use existing administrative data, traffic patterns, and performance metrics to design environments that are professional, accessible, and inspiring. This work will include lessons in designing "experiences" and messaging, from online presence, to the bus stop/parking lot, through the full continuum of services and will include a review of best practices of center design from around the country.

The relocation of the physical AJC space had been planned for July 2020. However, as a result of the onset of the pandemic these plans have been postponed and no firm relocation date has been established at this time. However, it is anticipated that relocation will occur during the course of the performance period of this contract.

### *Recommendations*

The consultant will provide a summary of the workforce system assessment for each process stage and include recommendations that integrate human-centered design methods to improve the AJC's customer experience and how these methods might be applied throughout the Cook County AJC system.

### *Documentation, Best Practices, Evaluation, and Guide for System-wide Implementation*

The AJC partners are committed to conducting a robust evaluation of the HCD improvements. The consultant will assist the AJC partners in developing a preliminary evaluation plan, including determining whether an additional resource is needed to conduct a qualitative and quantitative resource. If resources and capacity permit, consultant may also directly perform



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the evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the human-centered design changes implemented. Documentation of best practices and lesson learned from the project will be compiled into a toolkit/guidebook to facilitate HCD processes across the Cook County AJC system.

### **SECTION V: PROPOSAL QUESTIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**

The response shall show the full legal name and businesses address of the prospective vendor, including street address if different from mailing address, and must be signed and dated by the person or persons authorized to bind the prospective vendor.

All responses should contain at minimum the elements listed below:

1. **Overview of Qualifications;** provide a complete and coherent introduction to the applicant's capabilities to create a human-centered designed framework/processes, conduct research and focus groups/interviews, develop evaluation plans and fulfill other services outlined in this RFP. Identify and describe any experience with federally funded workforce programs and knowledge of the requirements of such programs. Describe any other experience in developing, implementing, and evaluating workforce programs.
2. Describe experience providing similar services and provide evidence of past success, using appropriate and reasonable metrics. Provide a detailed description of at least one previous plan or model that applicant developed and used to assist a workforce development or other social service system or provider in adopting a HCD framework. Describe the different phases of the project, the approach, and data collected. Describe any challenges you encountered and how you responded to them.
3. Describe how the current circumstances, i.e., COVID related closures and restrictions will affect your ability to carry out the scope of work described in the RFP, What practices will be used to engage AJC partners and get input from workforce system customers.
4. List (3) references that can attest to your organization's experience in the areas described in the Scope of Work.
5. **Timeline & Budget;** highlight tasks and key milestones to demonstrate a readiness and timeliness to perform services. Indicate if applicant is prepared to begin the project on November 1, 2020. If not, clearly indicate when you can begin project. Applicants should provide a detailed budget that addresses professional cost (salary, travel expense etc.) associated with the requested services. If applicant proposes an hourly rate based budget they must estimate expected number of hours



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needed to deliver services described in RFP.

6. **Financial Management Capacity:** Benchmarks and payment schedule will be negotiated during the contracting process. Describe your agency's financial capacity to manage this contract on a cost- reimbursement basis.
7. Has the organization ever been declared seriously deficient in the operation of a grant or contract? If so, please describe the circumstances.

### **SECTION VII. Submittal Procedure and Requirements**

#### **A. Period of Solicitation**

This RFP will be released on Tuesday, September 1, 2020. The deadline to submit a response to the RFP is Thursday, October 1, 2020 by no later than 4:00 pm (CST).

#### **B. RFP Inquiries, Questions and Answers**

All questions pertaining to the RFP must be received in writing via email at [submit@bcsillinois.org](mailto:submit@bcsillinois.org) by 5:00 pm (CST) on Tuesday, September 15, 2020. Use subject line "HCD." Questions received after September 15, 2020 will not receive a response.

Answers to all questions received by the designated deadline will be posted to <https://www.northcookjobcenter.com/> by Monday, September 21, 2020. Only those questions directed to the above email will be answered. No individual questions will be answered by phone, email, or in person.

#### **C. Submittal Procedure and Format**

To be considered for funding, respondents must submit a complete response to this RFP as described above in Section V: Proposal Questions and Required Documentation. All proposals must be submitted in **electronic form**. Any material considered proprietary must be so designated by annotation within the document.

#### **D. Submittal Address and Deadline**

Completed RFP responses must be submitted **electronically to: [submit@bcsillinois.org](mailto:submit@bcsillinois.org)**. RFP responses must be received **before or by 4:00 PM CST on Thursday, October 1, 2020**. **Proposals received after this date and time will not be accepted.**

#### **E. Proposal Review Process**

Proposals will be evaluated by a team of reviewers, which may include Business and Career Services staff, One-Stop Operator, Partnership staff, and the Core and Required partners of the One-Stop system.



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### **F. Notice of Award**

All respondents will be notified by mail as to their award status. Unsuccessful respondents who wish to obtain information on the evaluation of their proposal should submit a written request to this effect to [submit@bcsillinois.org](mailto:submit@bcsillinois.org).

### **G. Disallowed Costs and Cancellations**

The successful bidder must accept liability for all aspects of any Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program conducted under contract with Business and Career Services, Inc. The successful bidder will be liable for any disallowed costs or illegal expenditures of funds or program operations conducted. BCS reserves the right to cancel an award immediately if new state or federal regulations or policy makes it necessary to change the program purpose or content substantially, or to prohibit such a program.

### **H. Contracting**

Benchmarks and payment schedule will be negotiated during the contracting process. The contract award will not be final until BCS and the bidder have executed a mutually satisfactory contractual agreement. BCS reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposal submitted. No program activity may begin prior to the approval of the award and execution of an award letter and/or contractual agreement between the successful bidder and BCS. Reductions in the funding level of any contract resulting from this solicitation process may be considered during the contract period when a bidder fails to meet expenditure, and/or outcome goals specified in the contract or when anticipated funding is not forthcoming from federal or state governments. BCS reserves the right to determine the funding levels of the contract finally awarded. Such determination will depend upon overall fund availability and other factors arising during the proposal review process.

### **I. Cost and Negotiations**

BCS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received and to negotiate with any and all offers on modifications to proposals. Bids submitted which are over the maximum amount of funds specified for this RFP will be rejected. The proposal warrants that the costs quoted for services in response to the RFP are not in excess of those that would be charged any other individual for the same services performed by the bidder.

### **J. Modification of Contracts**

Any contract awarded pursuant to this RFP may be unilaterally modified by BCS upon written notice to the contractor under the following circumstances:

- a. Contractor fails to meet performance and service expectations set forth in the contract; or
- b. The federal or state government increases, reduces or withdraws funds allocated to BCS, which impact services solicited under this RFP; or
- c. There is a change in federal or state legislation and/or their regulations, local laws, or applicable policies and procedures.