

Vocational Skills Training Programs for Adult Learners in the Public Workforce System RFP – Questions & Answers

Philadelphia Works Inc. has released a Request for proposals (RFP) for entities seeking to operate cohort-based, vocational skills training programs for adult career seekers in the public workforce system. This second round of procurement will be focused on training programs in Biotechnology & Biomedical, Maintenance & Repair, and Manufacturing & Construction.

Deadline for receipt of proposals is December 8th, 2021 by 5:00PM ET. All proposals must be submitted electronically, with the subject line “**Vocational Skills Training RFP**” to VSTraining@philaworks.org.

Questions & Answers |

1. Can we submit a proposal for multiple programs?

You can propose multiple programs but will need to submit an individual proposal for each one. Each eligible training program must lead to an industry-recognized credential and prepare learners for success in one of the following Recovery Occupation categories: Maintenance and Repair, Manufacturing and Construction, and/or Biotechnology & Biomedical.

2. Do you have a list of occupations from Appendix A, that would qualify for this opportunity?

Please reference the dropdown options on the Coversheet (Attachment A), which allows you to choose from occupations associated with the three designated industry categories. The RFP is limited to the occupations and industries listed. Over the course of the fiscal year, we will procure for training programs centered around other industries.

3. Will vendors be dependent on the PA CareerLink® for referrals or will we be able to recruit independently?

While customers/participants should primarily be recruited through the PA CareerLink® Centers, training providers will be expected to work closely with the PA CareerLink® Center staff to actively support recruitment. In the event that prospective PA CareerLink® customers express interest in attending the contracted training program, contracted providers will be expected to follow existing processes to facilitate smooth connections to the PA CareerLink® Centers. Majority of Philadelphians qualify to be a PA CareerLink customer.

4. You'd indicated that supportive services like student transportation will be funded through the PA CareerLink® Centers. Can we include the cost of taking students on field trips in the budget?

Yes. If you are unsure, please include all programmatic costs in your budget sheets including operation expenses, cost of training supplies, program expenses, etc. If we move forward with contracting, we will negotiate the details of the budget with you.

5. Is the RFP limited to the occupations listed?

Yes, if a proposal does not fall into one of the 3 occupations or lead to an industry recognized credential, it will not be reviewed.

6. Are we allowed to use our own participant tracking database?

While participant tracking may differ amongst programs, contracted providers will be required to submit some participant outcomes data through a prescribed process that will be outlined by Philadelphia Works during contract negotiations. This outcomes information includes, but is not limited to, the student's training status (active, completed, terminated), credentialing status and employment status at completion.

7. Can you describe the work experience program currently in place? Can we increase the number of weeks based on participant performance and career path?

This question may require additional clarity, but we've aimed to answer adequately. Currently, there is not a training-related work experience program in place for vocational training participants. Philadelphia Works encourages providers to submit proposals with an eye toward thoughtful, evidence-informed program design.

8. Are there no pre-development contextual education pieces embedded?

In previous years, Philadelphia Works has requested proposals that embed literacy and math skills development alongside vocational skills development. While Philadelphia Works continues to value contextualized literacy and academic bridge programs, proposals for this RFP should not include pre-development contextual education.

9. Is there a target for the number of students per cohort?

At this time, there is no target number of student; it depends on the program, industry, and occupation.

10. Just to clarify are the student costs like uniforms, laptops above the estimated parallel tuition?

When completing the budget attachment, Philadelphia Works recommends taking into account (1) "parallel" tuition rates among comparable courses in the market and (2) previous procurement budget proposals; last cycle, budgets averaged around \$6,000/student. Please note that these numbers should simply be reference points for developing a cost-reimbursement budget.

11. Is there a form for the employer support document or is a letter of support acceptable?

Employers should utilize the Employer Support Attachment included within the RFP. We require at least one completed form, but organizations are welcome to submit multiple.

12. Would training providers be allowed to recruit students from PA CareerLink themselves?

Recruitment within the PA CareerLink® Centers will be required for all contracted training providers. Vocational training providers are the most effective recruiters for their own programs.

13. Are reporting requirements for anyone VSTs awardees different from the reporting requirements for ETPL providers?

Yes, reporting requirements can be somewhat different for VST awardees. PA CareerLink® staff are primarily responsible for collecting and updating participant information through the state database. Contracted training providers will primarily be responsible for communicating to PA CareerLink® staff about participant status, skills gains, credentialing, and employment, so that PA CareerLink® staff can accurately update participant information in the state database.

14. What types of industry-recognized credentials are preferred for this RFP?

Generally, proposed training programs should lead to credentials that are required or strongly preferred by employers and industry experts *and* are sufficient for obtaining an entry-level role in the industry. Credentials including OSHA 10 and CPR are valuable as secondary credentials; however, they are not sufficient for obtaining an entry-level role in the industry. For industry-specific questions about approved industry credentials, please contact vstraining@philaworks.org.

15. Would Lean Six Sigma for construction or manufacturing be considered?

Lean Six Sigma could be considered if the proposal demonstrates a commitment by an employer to hire entry-level career seekers with this credential.

16. Are accelerated bachelor degree programs eligible to apply?

Contracted programs should prepare career seekers for a certification that does not require a bachelors or associates degree.

17. Is there a minimum number of employer partners that you're looking for?

At least one employer support letter is required when submitting a proposal for Vocational Skills Training. However, additional employer support letters are welcome.

18. Do the proposed trainings need to be completed by June 30th?

Contracted programs may extend past June 30th depending on program length, credentials offered, and skilling opportunities (i.e., externships, internships, on the job training, etc.)

19. Do you have the occupations for the next round?

No, Occupations for the next round of procurement are still being determined based on need and demand.