

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.

The deadline for receipt of proposals is Monday, July 25th, 2022, at 5:00 PM 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 listed in Appendix A of the RFP.

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 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. If 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. Many 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 occupations listed 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 it 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. Could you define what "contextualizing literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy skills throughout the program" means?

Contextualized literacy, in this context, refers to an approach to teaching and learning that integrates developmental, adult basic education and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction with vocational training. The goal of contextualized literacy is to help training participants with academic skills that are lower than program entrance requirements to successfully attain a recognized credential through vocational training. Contextualized literacy embeds basic skills instruction into technical content instruction by drawing from content rooted in every day or/and workforce activities.

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

Currently, there is no target number of students per cohort; 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 a reference point 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 up to three.

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. VST providers typically do not need to report student names and social security numbers in the state system.

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. Are accelerated bachelor's degree programs eligible to apply?

Contracted programs should prepare career seekers for an industry-recognized certification. Accelerated Associates' and Bachelor's degree programs are ineligible.

16. 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.

17. Does the proposed training 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.)

18. 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.

19. Can we resubmit for a program that we are currently funded for this Fall? Would we receive funding through this round if we applied?

Active programs that were awarded funding through procurement in the last 12-18 months do not need to re-apply.

20. During the bidder's conference, one of the facilitators said that applications should be limited to 15 pages. Is that page limit a hard cap, and if so, are any components of the application or attachments not included in the page limit?

Please reference the maximum number of pages per section in guiding the length of your proposals. The narrative should be a maximum of 10 pages. The program implementation plan should be a maximum of 3 pages. The organizational experience summary should be a maximum of 3 pages.

21. Page 9 of the RFP under the audit information states that "Responders must also provide a copy of the organizations management/strategic plan which must also include an allocation of expenses, processes, and trends." 1) While we always include a statement about our allocation of expenses, what exactly are you looking for in terms of strategic plan, processes and trends? 2) Can we provide supplemental documentation with this information if it is not included in our audit?

This request was from a previous RFP that's not relevant for this procurement. Please disregard this request.

22. Page 5 of the RFP says that contracts will begin "in the Fall of 2023." Should this be 2022 instead of 2023?

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Contracts will run on Fiscal Year 23 and will begin in the Fall of 2022.

23. If an occupation category is listed as a Philadelphia works recovery occupation, however, a specific occupation is not explicitly listed, what is the process for having a profession added that is "worthy of a petition" (as mentioned in the RFP)?

Given the fixed timeline for procurement, Philadelphia Works will not be making changes to the list of eligible occupations for this round of procurement. There is a reference in the RFP regarding petitioning to include occupations on the state's High Priority Occupation List, which is a broader set of occupations than our recovery occupations. This petitioning process is unrelated to our procurement process.

24. How many vendors do you expect to select within this current cycle?

Philadelphia Works has not set a specific number of vendors for this cycle. To maximize recruitment efforts, we aim to fund no more than one or two programs per occupation.

25. What is the total funding available for this contract?

Philadelphia Works has not set an exact amount of funding for this contract.

26. How many participants do you plan to serve with these funds and contract awards?

Philadelphia Works has not set an exact number of participants for this contract award. Respondents

should take into account their capacity to recruit and enroll students and operate cohorts in 12- 18 months.

27. Can we offer training centered on entrepreneurship/financial literacy with maybe a life skills training component?

This program must lead to an industry credential in one of the designated recovery occupations. Unfortunately, an entrepreneurship program would not meet this criterion.

28. Are Training Providers allowed to target a specific population or demographic for recruitment?

The training program should be open and inclusive to all adult PA CareerLink® customers regardless of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.

29. Does completion of a pre-apprenticeship qualify as an industry-recognized credential?

The completion of a pre-apprenticeship does not, in itself, qualify as an industry-recognized credential. However, many pre-apprenticeships also support learners in obtaining an industry-recognized credential.

30. Is the expectation that if awarded, the training program must be exclusive to PA CareerLink Customers? Or should the program be inclusive of PA CareerLink Customers?

It is expected that training programs are inclusive of PA CareerLink® Customers; providers may choose to braid funds to include those funded through alternative programs or via self-pay. For instance, a vendor may run a class with 10 PA CareerLink® participants and 5 self-pay participants.

31. Are Training providers able to propose programs with a generalist design around an industry need that touches on some of the recovery occupations?

Unfortunately, a program with a generalist design would not be considered under this RFP. An eligible training program should prepare learners for a specific recovery occupation.

32. Should Appendix B include data from three different programs or the same program performance over the course of 3 years?

Training providers have the option to either include data from three different programs or the same program over the course of 3 years. You do not have to break out the data by year or cohort. You can include all 3 years of data on one page.

