Under the direction of the Chester County Commissioners and the Chester County Workforce Development Board, the Chester County Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is seeking proposals from providers who are interested in providing EARN Program Services in Chester County beginning on July 1, 2024. This RFP will be open from Wednesday, February 14, 2024, until Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.

The goal of this RFP is to increase consumer opportunities through enhanced experiences and outcomes by successfully leveraging funding and integrating workforce services.

**Key Objectives for the CCWDB:**
1. **Focus on overall improvement in customer experience:** CCWDB is seeking partners with a customer experience focus that understand and recommend innovative ways to effectively reach customers across the geographic, socioeconomic, and industry diversity of Chester County.
2. **Improve outcomes:** CCWDB is seeking partners with an outcomes-focus including the ability to articulate the quality, quantity and benefit of services provided to their customers.
3. **Expand reach:** Chester County is a geographically diverse county. The CCWDB is seeking partners who understand the unique challenges of Chester County and will recommend innovative ways to effectively reach customers in need in order to maximize the availability and access to Workforce Development services.

**Background:**
The Chester County Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is the entity designated by the Chester County Workforce Development Board (CCWDB) and the Chester County Commissioners to provide staff support to the CCWDB and act as the administrative entity and the fiscal agent for the operation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Programs in the Chester County Local Workforce Development Area.

It is the mission of the Chester County Workforce Development Board to provide training, employment, and workforce development services, to produce workers better equipped to compete in the global economy and destination of choice and a desirable place to invest, live, work, and raise a family.

**The Stevens Amendment**
The Stevens Amendment, Public Law 101-166, Section 511, is an appropriations provision that requires grantees of the Department of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education to disclose for a grant program the percent of the costs financed with federal funds.

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs are federally supported 100% by the U.S. Department of Labor as part of an award totaling $5,320,156.07 with $0 (0%) state, local and/or non-governmental funds.
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs are federally supported 100% by the U.S. Department of Human Services as part of an award totaling $1,262,612.48 with $0 (0%) state, local, and/or non-governmental funds.
Discretionary grants are federally supported by the U.S. Department of Labor as part of an award totaling $1,414,904.99 being state, local and/or non-governmental funds.

**Questions and Bidder’s Conference:**
EARN Program Services Bidder’s Conferences will be held on **Thursday February 29, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. at the PA CareerLink®-Chester County and United Way Financial Stability Center** at 479 Thomas Jones Way, Suite 500, Exton, PA 19341.

- Questions emailed to workforcedevelopment@chesco.org by 3:00 pm on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 will be answered and posted on the CCWDB website (www.chesco.org/wib) on Thursday, March 7, 2024. Any questions received after 3:00 pm on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, will not be answered.
- **Submission Format:** DWD will use an electronic submission format, available at www.chesco.org/wib.
- **Scoring:** Scores will be based on the following topics: Statement of Need, Program Management and Organizational Capacity, Program Design and Service Strategy, and Performance Management.
- **Due date:** Applications are due by **3:00 PM on Thursday, March 14, 2024.**
- **Start Date:** All program operations will be expected to commence **no later than July 1, 2024.**
- **Attachments:** Attachments can be accessed at www.chesco.org/wib and also on the last page of the electronic application form. Applications will not be accepted by the electronic system without the required attachments.
- **Electronic System:** Technical assistance requests regarding the electronic system, including log-in, viewing of previous applications/drafts, and attachments, will be directed to ccdcd@chesco.org

**EARN Program Provider Specifications**

**General Expectations**

The provision of services specified in this RFP requires substantive knowledge and understanding of the local labor market and applicable state and federal regulations and circulars, as well as knowledge of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act is paramount for a successful program. Knowledge and understanding of the full text and content of these applicable laws, regulations, and programmatic requirements, and the local customer base are the responsibility of the Proposer. Please note that requirements contained in this RFP may change based on revised local, state, and federal rules. Proposers will be required to make staffing and programmatic modifications to accommodate the changes throughout the life of the contract.

The selected entity will provide innovative, high-quality customer services using strategies that will enable customers to become employed in family-sustaining jobs. Proposers must be willing to develop new plans or revise existing program plans at the direction of CCWDB at any point during the life of the contract.
Scope of Work

Proposing entities are responsible for the minimum requirements outlined below. Proposers are encouraged to include additional activities and innovations within their proposals that meet the needs of job seeker and employer customers.

Integration of Services into the PA CareerLink® Chester County:

In a successful workforce development system there can be no stand-alone programs. The partners are interdependent upon each other to provide quality programs and services that benefit the customers they serve. The applicant in its proposal shall describe how employer engagement services will be integrated into the PA CareerLink® Chester County System, including the following specific information:

- Plans to coordinate and work interdependently with other organizations in the PA CareerLink® Chester County system to ensure the needs of customers are being met and that employer customers are adequately served by all Partners.
- Plans to coordinate and assimilate all functions including specific planned activities in support of the PA CareerLink® Chester County.
- Coordination with the United Way Financial Stability Center, and all other programs at the PA CareerLink® Chester County.

Minimum Requirements:

- Compliance with requirements as they relate to all programs
- Tracking and reporting of all activity
- Submission of required reports prior to established deadlines
- Understanding and sharing of programmatic guidance released at the local, state, and federal levels
- Cooperation with and maintenance of a strong working relationship with CCWDB staff
- Complete warm hand-off referrals to community agencies and PA CareerLink or Workforce partners to enable customers to remediate barriers
- Assign staff to appropriate teams and committees
- Act as an active member of the Business Services Team
- Provide easy access to services that are responsive to customer’s needs and makes them competitive in the local and regional labor market
- Provide workshops based on customer need and demand in areas such as job readiness, soft skill development, life skills (parenting, nutrition, etc.)
- Provide labor market and job availability information to customers
- Conduct employer outreach and engagement in coordination with the Business Services Team
- Participate in job fairs
- Ensure that accurate customer information is entered in appropriate databases, including, but not limited to, the Pennsylvania workforce development system of record
- Maintain confidentiality of customer information to meet the requirements of Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other Personal Identifying Information-related regulations
- If applicable, additional programmatic requirements as indicated by the funding stream
- Provide barrier remediation activities for participants in the program
• Attend Local Management Committee and facilitate Direct Service Team meetings
• Maintain a strong working relationship with County Assistance Office

Proposals

Proposals are divided into the following categories when submitted through the online grants management system. **Please note that only the narrative submitted electronically, and not additional narrative attachments, will be scored.** All proposals will be scored based on these categories:

• **Statement of Need (20 Points)**
  o Include local-level data from reliable sources
  o Describe characteristics of target population and community

• **Program Management and Organizational Capacity (15 Points)**
  o Describe the fiscal controls in place for auditing and accountability procedures, including years of operation and current annual budget
  o Demonstrate an understanding of applicable state guidelines and provide examples
  o Describe capabilities regarding data collection and performance management and provide examples
  o Identify strengths that your agency has that would make it successful in our community

• **Program Design and Service Strategy (50 Points)**
  o Include a detailed description of the services and activities proposed, including integration with other partners and services at the PA CareerLink® Chester County
  o Identify any assessments or other tools that will be utilized to maximize service delivery
  o Describe any applicable collaboration with industry partnerships, economic development, community-based organizations, other workforce development services, education providers, or other agencies
  o Describe any existing relationships and the leveraging of additional resources, including with mental health and housing organizations, in providing successful services under this proposal
  o Describe how services would be integrated with those at the PA CareerLink® Chester County
  o Include fiscal, staffing, and in-kind resources that would be leveraged through this proposal and other contracts administered by the CCWDB
  o Include a list of all proposed personnel who will be involved in the delivery of the proposed activities and the requirements for each position proposed
  o Submission of a detailed budget on provided template as well as a budget narrative
    ▪ The budget should be calculated and submitted based on one year of service provision
    ▪ The budget shall clearly identify which costs are programmatic and which costs are administrative

• **Performance Management (15 Points)**
  o Include quantitative and qualitative information regarding past performance in workforce development programming
  o Describe how you will meet, and exceed, the program metrics that the state mandates
  o Describe methods for collecting and analyzing customer feedback and utilizing results for continuous improvement
o Attach no more than three (3) letters of reference or recommendation from previous partners or grantors

**Required Attachments for ALL Applications**
- Budget Forms (Template Provided on website)
- Evidence of Liability Insurance
- Job Descriptions/Resumes of All Personnel
- Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest Form
- Organizational Chart
- Support Letters

**Optional Attachments:**
- Miscellaneous
- Evidence of Most Recent Program Performance Monitoring
- Any MOUs, if applicable

**Data Entry Requirements for all Providers**
The successful bidder may be required to register with and data enter information on the Pennsylvania workforce development system of record.

**County Requirements:**

1. **Reports:** A monthly report will be required for submission by the 10th of each month, as well as an in-depth report to be submitted by the 10th of every other month for inclusion in the CCWDB meeting packets. Elements of the reports are detailed in the specifications below and will be finalized during contract negotiations.
2. **Monitoring:** As a recipient of public funds, all successful applicants who sign a contract with DWD will be required to fully comply with ongoing reporting and monitoring requirements.
3. **Meetings:** Meetings shall be held with CCWDB staff and other partners as described in the specifications below.
4. **Certifications and Reservations:** Provision of services specified in this RFP requires substantive knowledge and understanding of the applicable rules and regulations. Recipients of federal, state, or local funding must certify compliance with applicable funding regulations and adhere to applicable definitions described in the Application Instructions & Guidelines. Additional certifications may be required depending on the specific program.
5. **Proposal Rejections:** The County, which specifically includes the Board of Commissioners and the CCWDB, reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received as a result of this RFP and to negotiate separately with competing applicants. The County, which specifically includes the Board of Commissioners and the CCWDB reserves the right to waive any and all technical requirements and informalities, as it deems necessary. No costs associated with the preparation or submittal of the application is reimbursable.
**Evaluation and Selection and Review Criteria:**
Proposals will be reviewed, scored, and evaluated through a review committee, consisting of Workforce Development Board Members and other knowledgeable individuals. The Review Team will make recommendations to the CCWDB and the Chester County Commissioners who will select the providers and make final decisions.

- A committee selected by the CCWDB will review proposals that meet the general criteria established by the RFP. The proceedings of the review committee are confidential. Members of the review committee are not to be contacted by proposers. Proposers who violate this provision risk exclusion from consideration.
- Through this review and evaluation process, each member of the review committee will evaluate each proposal to assess the proposed services and activities.
- Upon review and evaluation of proposals, the review committee will then meet to discuss each proposal.
- During the evaluation process, the review committee may, at its discretion, request any one or all proposers to make oral presentations. Such presentations will provide proposers with an opportunity to answer any question the review committee may have on a proposal. Not all proposers may be asked to make such oral presentations.
- Upon conclusion of the review and evaluation process, the review committee will recommend a provider to the Executive Director of the CCWDB. A recommendation will be made to the Chester County Workforce Development Board for approval, after which the recommendation will be made to the Chester County Commissioners for approval.

**Potential Conflict of Interest during the Selection Process**

Some CCWDB members and/or the entities the member represents or is employed by may be eligible to submit a proposal under this RFP.

- If a CCWDB member participates in discussions regarding the creation, review, or release of this RFP, the member and/or the entity s/he represents or is employed by will be disqualified from submitting a proposal or partnering with a lead applicant on a proposal.
- If a CCWDB member or the entity s/he represents or is employed by submits a proposal in response to this RFP, and the CCWDB member subsequently participates in discussion, review, or evaluation of proposals or the award of a contract to a successful applicant, the member and/or the entity s/he represents or is employed by will be disqualified from being awarded the contract under this RFP or partnering with the successful applicant.

*Applicants shall disclose all potential conflicts of interest in their proposal, including but not limited to, relationships with particular training or other service providers, through the Disclosure of Conflict of Interest Form.*
All Applicants
A service provider may apply for one, two, or all concurrent elements of this RFP cycle; however, the applicant shall describe in its proposal all firewalls and internal controls within the applicant-service provider entity in regard to competition, oversight, monitoring, and evaluation of the performance of the service provider if selected as contractor.

In the event the same entity is selected for more than one service element, then the selected entity will need to establish clear internal controls and firewalls. Firewalls and internal controls shall be shared in writing as part of the proposal. All firewalls and internal controls shall conform to the specifications in WIOA and its regulations and guidance, relevant OMB circulars, and all other federal, state, and local regulatory guidance, rules, and regulations.

In the event the successful applicant has been or will be selected to perform more than one (1) of the administrative or programmatic functions (ex. system operator, direct provider), the successful applicant will work with the County and the CCWDB to develop a written agreement to clarify how the successful applicant will carry out its responsibilities regarding these functions while demonstrating compliance with WIOA and its corresponding regulations and guidance, relevant OMB circulars and the State’s workforce system. This may also require state approval. The successful applicant shall not be permitted to assign the contract. Subcontracting of the contract shall only be permitted to other training providers, as authorized by the County.

Please be advised that the level of funding available is subject to change. All funding is contingent upon the availability of state funds in Chester County. Additionally, please be advised that any applicable budgetary items relating to profit will be negotiated separately at the time of contracting.

 Providers are invited to submit proposals for any or all of the categories, however, each category must be submitted separately and each contract will be awarded separately.

Contract Period
The anticipated time frame for the contract(s) that will be awarded from this RFP is July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. The submitted budget must be for a single year. At the start of the new program year, and each year thereafter, the contract(s) may be renewed, at the CCWDB and County Commissioners’ sole discretion, for three (3) additional one (1) year periods, up to a cumulative total of four (4) years (hereinafter referred to as the “Renewal Terms”). In the event the CCWDB and the County Commissioners elect, in their sole discretion, to exercise one or more of the renewal terms, the CCWDB and the County Commissioners will advise the successful contractor, in writing, of its intent to utilize a renewal term thirty (30) days prior to the end date of the then current term. Nothing herein shall prohibit the CCWDB and the County Commissioners from conducting an RFP during the term of the contract or any Renewal Term.

In the event of pricing changes due to changes in prevailing costs of labor and materials in the area, the successful contractor may submit a written request for price adjustments in line with these changes for the duration of any Renewal Term(s). Any requested price adjustment shall be received in writing by the CCWDB and the County Commissioners at least 100 days prior to the end of the then current term. The CCWDB and the County Commissioners reserve the right to accept or reject said proposed adjustments.
The successful contractor will be a contractor to the CCWDB and the County Commissioners and as such, will be expected to work closely with the CCWDB staff to assure continuity across administration of all WIOA workforce funds allocated to the County (fiscal agent).