

## Bidders' Conference Questions and Answers

### In-School and Out-of-School WIA RFPs

Conference Held April 1, 2011, 3 p.m. at the New Bedford Career Center Youth Annex

**Question:** Slide #7 entitled, "Important Dates/Times" appears to have erroneous dates and times. Please clarify.

**Answer:** The date and time are wrong. **Proposals are due by Friday, April 15, 2011 – 3 p.m.** Proposals must be submitted to the WIB, as stated in the RFP and on the slide.

**Question:** Please clarify the "strength-based approach."

**Answer:** In a strength-based approach to youth services, adults focus on the positive. Specific challenges and hurdles facing young people are not always readily known; thus, being positive and encouraging assists them in overcoming the challenges and participating in efforts that will benefit them. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) elements come into play in a strength-based approach, with such components as tutoring, mentoring, case management, supportive services, occupational skills training, etc.

**Question:** What is different about this year's RFPs?

**Answer:** The state's requirement that all WIA Title I youth programming be subject to the Common Measures for performance outcomes has required that the WIB re-think the kinds of programs that will be funded as well as the population to be served. Under Common Measures, both in-school and out-of-school youth outcomes are held to the same measures; in the past, there were different performance outcomes for in-school and out-of-school youth.

The focus going forward will be largely on older out-of-school youth. However the Youth Council Planning Committee, working in concert with New Directions, concluded that the roughly 135 enrolled in-school youth should not be summarily removed from programs. As a result, the WIB is procuring for two programs to serve enrolled in-school youth: (1) for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who are on track to graduation; and (2) for other in-school youth, with a focus on providing services that will keep them on track to graduate, obtain a nationally recognized certification, find and secure employment, join the military, or enter post-secondary education. Some of those in the latter in-school group will likely shift to the older group as they progress through the program. Specifics on the Common Measures are included in the RFP.

Depending upon funding, programs are set to operate for two years, ending June 30, 2013.

**Question:** For many young people under the age of 18, the ability to obtain a certificate does not exist. For example, how do vendors handle the young person who has completed all the requirements for a child care certificate but cannot sit for the test because that individual is not yet 18?

**Answer:** This year's procurement offers a "tailored services" option, where the vendors may partner with the Career Center, which is currently developing a "menu" of certifications. In addition, Key Train offers some options for young people. The Career Center holds a Key Train license. Vendors may wish to learn more about what Key Train can offer both individual participants and programs. Please contact Wendy Andrade [wandrade@detma.org](mailto:wandrade@detma.org) for details. Also, the Key Train site will have additional information. <http://www.keytrain.com>. Please note that "tailored services" options must be determined on a case-by-case basis, with a clear determination of the level and scope of services requested by a potential vendor.

**Question:** Please clarify the in-school RFP program configuration relating to the older students.

**Answer:** The RFP offers two program options, as noted. The Planning Committee looked at the composition of the current enrollments, of which some 33 had declared themselves as seniors. Of those, 11 are on track to graduate. The rest require additional credits and/or MCAS tests. It was determined that a smaller program targeting those students would help build the connection between school and work; would support school success; and, with a Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Math (STEM) work focus, would better prepare these young people for post-secondary education or a job.

**Question:** There are issues for those with learning disabilities relative to certificates of completion. MOSES does not accept a certificate of completion as an outcome. How do we address this?

**Answer:** The WIB and New Directions will ask about incorporating a field for "Certificate of Completion" for reporting purposes.

**Question:** Is enrollment in SMEC or SAIL equivalent to advanced training?

**Answer:** Those organizations seek to assist people with disabilities obtain employment. If the individuals are hired, it is considered a positive outcome. Outcomes and progress for each youth are measured individually.

**Question:** What are "nationally recognized" certifications?

**Answer:** The Career Center offers nationally recognized certifications through the National Retail Federation as well as is the Microsoft Office certification and Key Train Career Readiness.

**Question:** How much will New Directions charge for "tailored services," in particular these certifications?

**Answer:** Costs will be negotiated based on enrollment projections and scope of work. However, preliminary estimates suggest a cost of about \$200/youth, based on groups of 25. Final costs will also depend on the cost of vouchers to test, staffing needs, and possible incentives for the youth.

**Question:** As young people seek to enroll in WIA, is New Directions advising them about testing?

**Answer:** The youth coming to the Annex recently have been seeking summer employment. Incentives provide a level of motivation for youth people to attend testing and support sessions. Each program will be looked at carefully, and a course of action for “roll-out” will be determined.

**Question:** Please explain what is needed to show demonstrated progress through testing.

**Answer:** In literacy/numeracy, all out-of-school youth must move a full Educational Functioning Level (EFL). EFLs cover more than a grade level, making advancement more of a challenge in some cases. For example, a TABE test for someone beginning in the grades 3-4 level and moving to a 4.1-5.8 is NOT viewed as a positive shift. However, moving from 5.9 to 6.1 IS a positive EFL shift.

For in-school youth, grade increases only require school records. The TABE is no longer a requirement.

**Question:** Is TABE the only acceptable test?

**Answer:** No. The BEST is also acceptable. Youth must be pre-tested and post-tested using the same assessment tool. New Directions is seeking approval for Key Train, which is user friendly and interactive, which may make it more appealing to young people. However, those who have been pre-tested using TABE or BEST may not sit for a Key Train post-test.

**Question:** Must all youth have a complete Work-Based Learning Plan (WBLP)?

**Answer:** Yes. The WIB is looking for more active work-based experiences while young people are enrolled in school. It is recognized that internships for younger youth, in particular, are a challenge; however, the data support the value of such opportunities. As a result, the WIB strongly encourages work experiences and requires the use of the WBLP to document the experiences.

**Question:** What happens to a participating senior who graduates without passing MCAS?

**Answer:** Those youth can be enrolled in the Pathways Program, which provides support for MCAS success and other important services.

#### **OTHER:**

**Funding Levels:** Last year \$945,000 in WIA funding supported services to young people. Of that, 45% funded vendors; 44% paid for the full range of framework services (e.g., eligibility determination, case management, reporting, outreach and recruitment, etc.); and 11% was available for youth summer jobs wages. We do not yet have a funding commitment for FY '12.

**What Works Best?** Youth who are engaged with a caring adult tend to perform well and stay with a program. A strong connection is essential.

**Youth with Individual Education Plans (IEPs):** Under WIA, these young people are considered a “family of one.” Only their income, if any, is required to be reported for purposes of eligibility. The income of

other family members is not required. Youth with IEPs who are not working must complete an "Applicant Statement" confirming their lack of income.

**Program Time Frames:** In-school – Sept. to June; with a summer component running July 11 until August 19. Out-of-school – rolling enrollment; youth are encouraged to stay with the program until their goals are met.

**In-School Summer Work Component:** Depending on the funding, the work programs will operate 20-25 hours each week.

**Application Process:** the WIA application process is fully centralized at the Youth Annex. Applications were first circulated in mid-February. No more applications will go out after April 30. As of this date, there are 760 applications in circulation. Some 300 have been returned to the Annex and are being reviewed by staff for completeness and eligibility. Placement is determined based on the time of eligibility: the first deemed eligible will be the first placed. There will be no additional application cycle, unless substantial additional funding is forthcoming.

**Monthly Reporting:** The monthly case notes for New Directions are still required. The WIB requires a monthly report as well as a new template detailing monthly status. This latter document will be used in program monitoring. A copy is included in the RFP.

## Questions and Answers

### WIA In-School and Out-of-School FY '12 RFP

**Question:** How should attachments be transmitted electronically?

**Answer:** Attachments may be formatted in PDF. Questions relating to formatting may be directed to Annie Massicotte, GNBWIB Office Manager.

**Question on Budget Preparation:** How should the Year 2 budget be calculated? Given that costs do not remain static, year to year, and that programs running for two years may have different needs (due to different student populations) in each program year, should budgets for the second year use the first year as a baseline? Will projected cost increases be acceptable?

**Answer:** The Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council Planning Committee will discuss the budget in more detail. However, annual adjustments to fixed costs (e.g., contractually obligated teacher pay rates) will be acceptable. In addition, it is understood that programs will not simply repeat a curriculum, but will make every effort to provide expanded and enriching program content to all participating youth. In all cases, a 25% match will be required for Year 2.

**Question:** What impact on performance measures will youth leaving the program prior to the two-year period?

**Answer:** Details on performance measures are included in the RFP. Literacy/Numeracy measures are at the end of this document.

**Question:** Summer hours are reflected in the RFP as going from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. There is a requirement for a half-hour lunch period. Are these hours correct?

**Answer:** No. the hours are 8:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. with a half-hour break for lunch.

**Question:** What are the dates for the summer program?

**Answer:** Summer programs will run from July 13 until August 21.

**Question:** The RFP notes that year-round follow up is required. How must the follow up be accomplished?

**Answer:** Year-round follow up remains with New Directions. The RFP is in error.

Year-round follow-up is required of all vendors; that is, the case management/mentoring piece. The WIA definition of follow-up services is what happens after a youth is exited from the WIA Title 1 Youth program. New Directions is contracted to provide follow-up services but the vendors are required the work all year with active youth.

**Question:** Are TABE test results provided upon referral to programs?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** How often must youth be assessed?

**Answer:** All out-of-school youth receive the full battery TABE. Those achieving at a level of 8.9 or below must increase at least one educationally functioning level in a year. It is recommended that retests be administered earlier in the year (Jan. or Feb.) so that there is adequate time to insure literacy and numeracy gains. New Directions sets goals on a quarterly basis. Vendors may consider a similar plan of action.

Those scoring above 9.9 do not require any follow-up assessment.

For in-school youth, only one test is administered, but the expectation is that youth will increase a grade level. Again, testing earlier is preferable so as not to compete with MCAS or other activities occurring later in the academic year.

**Question:** When will the In-School roster be available?

**Answer:** Mid-June.

**Question:** On Page 25 of the Out-of-School RFP, the hours appear to reflect the In-School hours. Are Out-of-School providers able to choose their own hours?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Is progressing from 8.9 to 9.0 on the TABE considered a gain? Is this for Reading and Math?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** How is adult mentoring tracked?

**Answer:** Tracking is typically accomplished using time sheets. Procurement of case management/mentoring is tracked with time sheets. Monthly case notes describing case management/mentoring services are to be submitted to New Directions on a monthly basis in the form of a case note. Additional training regarding case note documentation will be provided at vendor training after contracts are awarded. An attestation is also acceptable.

**Question:** May an individual attached to another program internal to the organization be assigned as a mentor?

**Answer:** Yes.

## Questions Relating to the WIA Application Process

**Question:** Why is the application 10 pages long?

**Answer:** WIA eligibility determinations require a great deal of detailed information. The application is actually two application forms in one package, allowing New Directions the opportunity to evaluate whether or not a particular youth is WIA eligible or is more likely to benefit from Youth Works funding. Because of the information captured, youth do not need to complete two separate applications. In addition, there are a number of release forms included in the application package. Some of these forms permit New Directions to obtain important eligibility documentation from agencies and schools. A Health Condition Report is now also part of the package. New Directions experienced accuracy issues with youth completing the health information during Orientation and determined that complete information is best obtained with family input during the application process. This information is also conveyed to mentors for the summer programs and includes two emergency contact names/numbers.

**Question:** What is the definition of "Family"?

**Answer:** Due to the complexity of WIA regulations, specific information on this definition is best obtained from Elizete Perry at [EPerry@detma.org](mailto:EPerry@detma.org) or at 508-990-4157. Elizete will be able to supply current information on specific eligibility issues.

**Question:** What forms of documentation are required of applicants?

**Answer:** The requirements are very specific and may include pay stubs, social security cards, Mass Health cards, birth certificates, and more, depending on each individual's situation. Passports may be used in place of several forms of identification. Elizete Perry is the contact person for details.

**Question:** Many families decline the opportunity to have their children participate in programming because of concerns that the family's earnings could be negatively impacted. Would it be possible to include language on the application cover sheet advising parents that their earnings will remain intact even if their children are enrolled?

**Answer:** Yes.

## Other Information:

- The WIA application can be accessed on line at [www.newdirectionssouthcoast.org](http://www.newdirectionssouthcoast.org).
- The In-School and Out-of-School Requests for Proposals may be accessed at [www.gnbwib.org](http://www.gnbwib.org). All attachments are available on line as well.
- All referrals will issue from New Directions Southcoast, Inc.
- In-School referrals typically begin at the end of March and into early April.
- Out-of-School referrals continue throughout the year.
- Programs with a very narrow focus may experience delays or difficulty filling available slots. Broader programs with flexibility are encouraged.

**1. Numeracy, Literacy and Skill Attainment**

**In-School Programs (Skill Attainment)** - Eighty percent (80%) of all active participants who are basic skills deficient must increase skill level by grade level as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment tool.

- *Individual exemptions to this performance measure may be made under extenuating circumstances and will be determined by the Youth Services Manager and the Youth Council Director. Examples of youth who may qualify for exemption would be an individual who is unable to complete a TABE test due to a significant learning or developmental disability.*
- *Subcontracting vendors are responsible for administering the TABE test to all youth enrolled in vendor program. Specific information regarding TABE test requirements are outlined in section D- Statement of Work portion of this contract.*
- *Completed TABE tests must be returned to the Youth Services Department. Subcontracting vendor will monitor progress toward this goal by documenting TABE scores on the attached table.*
- *Youth who are not assessed as basic skills deficient (reading and math above 9.0 as determined by TABE Score) will be exempt from this performance measure.*

**Out-of-School Programs- (Numeracy and Literacy)**- 70% of all youth participants who are basic skills deficient must increase their Educational Functioning Level (EFL) by one level as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment tool.

<b>ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) LEVELS</b>	<b>ALIGNED WITH WHAT GRADE LEVELS?  (TABE scale scores)</b>
1. Beginning ABE Literacy	0-1.9
2. Beginning Basic Education	2-3.9
3. Low Intermediate Basic Education	4-5.9
4. High-Intermediate Basic Education	6-8.9
5. Low Adult Secondary Education *	9-10.9
6. High Adult Secondary Education *	11-12

