

GREATER NEW BEDFORD

WIB

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD, INC.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**Educational Attainment &
Work Readiness
Initiative**

Issued by: The Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

Educational Attainment & Work Readiness Initiative

I. Grant Summary

- A. **Background:** The region's educational attainment statistics illustrate a critical need for expanded Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services in Greater New Bedford. Statistics also show the most acute need within the region exists in the City of New Bedford. According to a recent Market and Economic Analysis commissioned by the City, the New Bedford high school graduation rate was 57.4%, as compared to 79.9% for the Commonwealth overall. The dropout rate (students who neither graduate nor take the General Educational Development examination or GED) was 24.8%. Reflecting the great need for ESOL services, the report also states that nearly 40% of New Bedford residents speak a language other than English at home compared to only 18% of residents in Massachusetts. Low educational attainment in the region correlates to low wage employment, underemployment, and, as a result, the perpetuation of challenging socio-economic conditions.

When businesses and potential employers are asked what they are looking for in an employee, the response is unanimous: Job Readiness. Job Readiness consists of "soft skills," such as being on time or calling in if you are going to be late, dressing appropriately for the job, having the right attitude, working well individually or in a group, critical thinking skills, communicating effectively, and working through difficult problems. Job Readiness "hard skills" consist of basic computer skills,

reading comprehension, business writing, pre-employment preparedness, customer service, business math, and general business environment knowledge.

The Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc. (WIB) has made literacy and adult education a priority. However, as part of a government system that receives much of its funding under the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the WIB must comply with federal guidelines. One such requirement is that ABE and ESOL offerings be paired with workforce training. One way the WIB fulfills this requirement is the pairing of Work Readiness training with ABE and ESOL.

The funding for the Educational Attainment & Work Readiness Initiative (EAWRI) is through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Under ARRA, recipients are held to spending down funding as quickly as possible. Therefore, applicants funded under this request for proposals (RFP) will be given approximately 10 months to complete their program. It should be noted that the WIB recognizes the need and benefit in ABE and ESOL classes being offered for multiple years at a time and that a 10 month time frame for such a program is not ideal.

- B. ***Proposals Sought:*** The WIB seeks proposals for EAWRI for WIA eligible participants (See Section III A), residing in the WIB region (See “About the Grantor” below). EAWRI is composed of four (4) grant opportunities:
1. Two (2) intermediate to high level ESOL with Work Readiness classes;
 2. One (1) Pre-General Educational Development (GED) with Work Readiness class; and
 3. One (1) GED with Work Certified™ class.

(See Section III B for project scope information).

C. **Purpose:** EAWRI shall result in an increased learning level for each participant (or at least 80% of all participants) (learning level increase based on pre and post program testing) and receipt of a Job Readiness training Certificate of Completion or a nationally recognized work readiness credential, such as the Work Certified credential or the National Work Readiness Credential, depending upon the individual learner's level. The main goal of EAWRI is a gain in employment status, e.g., unemployed to employed, under employed to gainfully employed, receive a wage increase, receive a promotion, etc.

D. **About the Grantor:** The WIB is a business-led, policy-setting board that oversees workforce development initiatives in the ten-community region stretching from Dartmouth to Wareham, MA. Appointed by New Bedford Mayor Scott W. Lang, the Board is composed of business, civic, education, labor, and community leaders.

The WIB oversees workforce development efforts in Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Freetown, Lakeville, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Rochester, and Wareham. Included are the Greater New Bedford Career Center and the Wareham Career Center, both operated jointly by New Directions Southcoast, Inc. and the Massachusetts Division of Career Services.

The WIB is the agent for delivering state and federally funded programs for employment, training, and economic development systems. The WIB oversees contractors, through a bid process, who deliver services authorized for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Adult, Dislocated (laid off) Worker, and Youth.

E. **Eligible Applicants:** Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Non-profits, and Educational Institutions. Non-profit applicants must hold a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service.

- F. **Partners/Collaboration:** Partnerships and collaborations with local organizations and municipalities are encouraged but not required. However, collaboration with your local One Stop Career Center is required.
- G. **Application Deadline:** August 21, 2009, 4:00 PM
- H. **Funding Availability:** Four applications, as described in Sections I B and III B, will be funded in the amount of \$65,000.00 each.
- I. **Match Requirement:** There is no match requirement for this grant program. Any matching or in-kind funds will be viewed positively (See Section V B).
- J. **Anticipated Duration of Contracts:** Contracts will last 10 months, beginning on or about September 9, 2009.
- K. **Regulations, Statutes or Authorization Governing this Grant Program:** The federal Workforce Investment Act and the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act govern, authorize and fund this grant program (See section III E).
- L. **Contact Information:** Bridget Alexander, Director of Development, 227 Union Street, Suite 206, New Bedford, MA 02740; balexander@gnbwib.org; 508-979-1504 ext. 15.

II. Application Schedule

Friday, 7/24/09	Request for Proposals released
Friday, 7/31/09	Bidders' Conference, at the WIB, 3 PM
Monday, 8/3/09	Final Question & Answers Posted
Friday, 8/21/09	Proposals Due
Friday, 8/28/09	Estimated Award Date
Friday, 9/8/09	Estimated Contract Start Date

- A. **Bidders' Conference:** An optional Bidders' Conference will be held on Friday, July 31, 2009, at 3 PM at the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board, Inc.'s office at 227 Union Street, New Bedford, MA 02740. **All potential applicants interested in attending the conference must register by Wednesday, July 29, 2009, 5 PM.** To register, please email your name and contact information to Bridget Alexander at balexander@gnbwib.org. Please include "Educational Attainment & Work Readiness Initiative" in the subject line of the email. Questions and answers arising from the Bidders' Conference will be posted on the WIB's website (www.gnbwib.org) within three business days of the conference.
- B. **Clarification Period:** Questions about the EAWRI RFP will be accepted in writing through Friday, July 31, 2009, 5 PM. Please submit questions via email to Bridget Alexander at balexander@gnbwib.org. All questions will be responded to and posted on the WIB's website at www.gnbwib.org by Monday, August 3, 2009. **However, all potential applicants are advised to check the WIB's website periodically for additional information and updates up until the application due date.**

III. Performance and Contract Specifications

A. Workforce Investment Act Eligibility & Participation in this Program: All participants under this grant must be WIA eligible. Eligibility under WIA will be determined by the Greater New Bedford and Wareham Career Centers, operated by New Directions Southcoast, Inc.

While the Greater New Bedford Career Center will determine eligibility, it is the responsibility of the successful applicant to market the program and recruit potential participants.

B. Eligible Projects/Scope(s) of Work: Applicants may apply for one or all four of the following grant programs. If you wish to apply for more than one grant program you must submit a separate application for each grant.

1. ESOL – Two ESOL classes, as described below, will be funded at \$65,000 each and will be run within the City of New Bedford.

- i.** Participants must be WIA eligible individuals residing anywhere within the WIB region.
- ii.** The ESOL courses must be designed for the Intermediate or High Level ESOL learner.
- iii.** A Work Readiness certificate course must be integrated into the ESOL class, such as Florida Works (see Section III C).
- iv.** Courses will serve a maximum of 15 people on an open enrollment basis.
- v.** Courses will run 20 hours per week, for 38-40 weeks (September – June with holidays and school vacations off).
- vi.** Participants must be administered a pre and post test, such as the Basic English Skills Test (BEST).

2. Pre-GED- One Pre-GED class, as described below, will be funded at \$65,000 and will be run in the City of New Bedford.

- i. Participants must be WIA eligible individuals residing anywhere within the WIB region.
- ii. A Work Readiness certificate course must be integrated into the Pre-GED class, such as Florida Works (see Section III C).
- iii. This course will serve a maximum of 15 people on an open enrollment basis.
- iv. Courses will run 20 hours per week, for 38-40 week period (September – June with holidays and school vacations off).
- v. Participants must be administered the Test of Basic Adult Education (TABE) prior to starting the course and upon completion of the course.

3. **GED** – One GED class, as described below, will be funded at \$65,000 and will be run in the Town of Wareham.

- i. Participants must be WIA eligible individuals residing anywhere within the WIB region.
- ii. The **Work Certified™** course must be integrated into the GED class (see Section III C).
- iii. This course will serve a maximum of 15 people on an open enrollment basis.
- iv. Courses will run 20 hours per week, for 38-40 week period (September – June with holidays and school vacations off).
- v. Participants must be administered the Test of Basic Adult Education (TABE) prior to starting the course and upon completion of the course.

C. Work Readiness Programs



1. www.floridaworks.org The research based Florida Works Career Building Skills Program was developed with extensive input from Florida businesses through a grant from the Florida Department of Education Division of Workforce Development. Written at a 4th-6th grade reading level it is designed to meet the employment training needs of adults and youth with low literacy skills and limited work experience. There are two components of Florida Works: Job Readiness and Job Retention. There are additional materials focused on *Developing Reading Fluency and ESOL Competency with Florida Works* (See attachments F5 – F6).

Job Readiness Training

A 63 hour program consisting of two workbooks entitled 'Planning the Work of a Lifetime' (Book A) and 'Getting the Job You Want' (Book B). Workbooks are available on-line at no cost at

<http://www.floridaworks.org/modules.html#modules 1-4>.

Together, the books address topics such as:

Describing your best personal qualities and transferable skills
Identifying your career interests and goals;

Describing the employment outlook for your area;

Successfully filling out a job application;

Developing and using a network and following up on leads;

Making a good impression in the interview;
Answering the ten toughest interview questions; and
Naming ways to remain positive in your job search.

Job Retention Training

A 25 hour program that utilizes two workbooks entitled 'Making the Most of Your Job' (Book C) (includes Spanish Version - Module 8 "How Can I Get Off On The Right Foot?") and 'Problem Solving on the Job' (includes Spanish version). Workbooks are available on-line at no cost at http://www.floridaworks.org/modules.html#modules_1-4.

Together, the books address topics such as:

Working cooperatively with co-workers and customers;
Putting safety first;
Identifying ways to learn on the job;
Knowing when and how to speak up;
Understanding dependability and punctuality; and
Being prepared to handle unexpected changes.

i. Instructors & Curriculum

- a. No instructor certification is required. A CD-ROM is available for instructor review.
- b. The curriculum is supplied at no charge. Please see Attachments F1, F2 & F4
- c. Training Modules, Activities and more are available at www.floridaworks.org.

ii. Testing – National Work Readiness Credential (NWRC)-

www.castleworldwide.com/nwrc/

- a. Candidates deemed prepared to take the NWRC test, which consists of four components/tests, may take the test with your proctors at your location (see below). Testing costs \$65 per participant and must be included in your budget. One caveat here is the fact that Florida Works does not include a math section in its curriculum and math is one of the tests on the NWRC. You may have your instructor include a basic math section at your discretion. If so, please speak to this in your narrative answers.

Participants not deemed prepared would receive a Certificate of Completion for completing the Florida Works curriculum.

- b. Testing Site – To become a NWRC testing site please read the attached “Becoming an Assessment Site for the National Work Readiness Credential,” marked Attachment F3. Next, there is the application at www.castleworldwide.com/nwrc/, which must be completed. It will take approximately two weeks to become a testing site. The cost is \$300, which must be included in your budget. You are not required to be a testing site at the time of application for this grant program.
- c. Proctors – Proctors can become certified on-line and through a phone interview at a cost of \$25 each, which must be included in your budget. You will need two proctors. Again, information is at www.castleworldwide.com/nwrc/ to undergo this process.

2. **Work Certified™** www.workcertified.org & www.workcertified.com

The overall Work Certified™ program goal is to teach and verify skills and behaviors that ensure the success of entry-level employees in the workplace. The approach is more like a business training program with certification only given to participants whom have demonstrated that they

are truly ready to be responsible, productive employees. The class is conducted like a business. Students are “co-workers.” Teachers are “supervisors.” There is a strong emphasis on learning in a hands-on business context and the classroom functions as a business.

- i. Instructors & Curriculum - Due to time constraints, you will need to locate and hire a currently certified instructor. If you do not know of a certified instructor the WIB can help you locate one. Teachers in the Work Certified™ program undergo a 30-hour training program and must obtain a score of at least 90% on the 75-question certification test. The performance of certified teachers is audited annually and all teachers must attend an annual meeting addressing program updates and changes. This grant does not cover costs for training teachers. Applicants must either have access to certified teachers or provide training from applicant’s funds. We would need to put together a group of five instructor candidates to run a training course.

The Work Certified™ curriculum includes nine modules combining core academic areas with soft skills or employability areas including:

- Reading comprehension;
- Business tools (computers plus);
- Business writing;
- Pre-employment;
- Customer service;
- Job skills I (Work Maturity);
- Job skills II (Employability);
- Business Math; and
- General Business Knowledge.

- ii. Testing - To become Work Certified™, students must participate in a 90 hour program, master 50 competencies, and score 80% or better on a comprehensive examination.
- iii. License - The WIB holds the license to run the Work Certified™ program through this grant. There is no additional charge to you to operate under this license.
- iv. Books –
 - 1. There are three Work Certified™ books:
 - a. Reading - North Star Reading and Writing, Second Edition, Laurie Barton, Carolyn Dupapquier Sardinas
 - b. Business Writing - Revised Edition, Business Writing, Wilma Davidson, Ed.D
 - c. Job Skills - Job Savvy, Third Edition, Laverne L. Ludden, Ed.D.
 - 2. The WIB will loan copies of the three books used for the Work Certified™ program to the successful candidate. However, if you wish to keep the books for future use or give the books to the participants to keep, there will be a fee involved. The amount for 15 of each book is still being determined. We will post pricing information by August 3, 2009.

D. Eligible Applicants: Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Non-profits, and Educational Institutions. Applicants must hold a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service.

Other Partners:

Collaboration with your local One Stop Career Center is required.

Any partnership must have formal agreements about the process for decision-making and the roles, responsibilities, commitments and contributions (financial and other) of each partner. **Signed Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) that incorporate these agreements are required for all members of the partnership.** Partners may be added, with a signed MOA, after the beginning of the grant period providing there is prior notification to and approval by the WIB.

E. Regulations, Statutes or Authorization Governing this Grant Program: On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the historic American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the “Recovery Act” or “Act”). As the President said, “The Act provides a direct fiscal boost to help lift our Nation from the greatest economic crisis in our lifetimes and lay the foundation for future growth.” The Act provides funding to significantly increase training of America’s workforce. The new funds flowing through the WIB will be administered at the federal level by the Department of Labor (DOL) under the existing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system, and at the state level by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. DOL is strongly encouraging that adults and dislocated workers receive training for access to careers in emerging green jobs fields.

F. Standard Terms & Conditions: See Attachment E.

G. Outcomes: See Outcomes Chart, marked Attachment D.

H. Reporting Requirements: The project manager shall submit a report to the WIB quarterly. The project manager shall also submit a final report within 30 days of completion of the program. See Outcomes chart, marked Attachment D.

- I. Payment:** The successful applicant will be reimbursed up to ninety percent (90%) of the costs of this contract on a cost reimbursement basis. The remaining ten percent (10%) will be reimbursed on a performance basis.

The contract payment standards for this contract are as follows:

1. Submission of a cash reimbursement form (see Attachment C1) with documentation of expenses as detailed in the line item budget.
2. Documentation shall include:
 - a. Copies of invoices or other evidence of purchases;
 - b. Timesheet or a summary of staff hours worked at contracted rates;
 - c. Allocated items (insurance, premises) - evidence of total payment; and
 - d. Overhead or Indirect Costs -will be accepted per approved rate.
3. There will be an allowable variance of 10% for any line item without modification.
4. The WIB will provide the necessary reimbursement forms.
5. Reimbursement forms should be submitted on a monthly basis and are due in the Finance Department of the WIB within thirty (30) days of the month that spending occurred.
6. The final financial report is due no later than thirty (30) days after the termination of the program.

IV. Instructions for Application Submission

A. Application Submission Instructions

1. Narrative responses shall be no longer than 20 double spaced pages.
2. Times New Roman font size 12.
3. One inch margins.
4. Include narrative questions with answers.
5. Include page numbers: _ of _.
6. Include a header with the title of the grant and name of applicant.

7. One copy of the complete application packet in Word format and one copy of the complete application packet in Adobe pdf e-mailed to balexander@gnbwib.org, by 4pm, August 21, 2009.
8. One hard copy of the complete application packet delivered to the WIB office, 227 Union Street, Suite 206, New Bedford, MA 02740, by 4 PM, August 21, 2009.

B. Grant Application Package Components

1. Proposal Cover Sheet - Attachment A
2. Narrative Questions – Attachment B
3. Budget & Budget Narrative – Attachment C
4. Cash Reimbursement Form – Attachment C₁
5. Implementation Timeline - of your own design
6. Organizational Chart – of your own design
7. Outcomes Chart – Attachment D
8. General Terms & Conditions – Attachment E
9. Florida Works – Attachments F₁ – F₆
10. Other Attachments – No Limit

V. Application Evaluation Process and Criteria

A. Application Evaluation Process

Step 1: Applications will be screened for completeness, conformity to the application guidelines and timeliness of response. Applications that are incomplete, non-conforming, or late will not be considered for full review.

Step 2: The review committee will examine all eligible submissions and will score each submission based on the responses within the Narrative Questions, Budget & Budget Narrative and attachments as outlined below.

Review results will be documented. The WIB reserves the right to request additional information from any applicant to ensure that the review committee has a complete understanding of the proposal.

B. Application Evaluation Criteria:

Minimum Threshold – 0 Points

- Application Complete and responsive
- Application includes all required attachments

Team & Qualifications – 10 Points (Questions 1 through 4 and attachments)

- Applicant Qualifications – 6 Points
- Staff Qualifications – 4 Points

Program Design and Outcomes – 20 Points (Questions 5 through 11 and attachments)

Budget – 15 Points (Budget & Budget Narrative Forms)

Additional Points – 5 Points

- Partnerships
- Matching or In-Kind Funds
- Clear, Concise, Well Organized, and Easy to Read Application