



Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board

Serving Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties

Request for Proposal (RFP) Marketing Campaign for Disconnected Youth

RFP Coordinator:

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Release Date: February 16, 2024

Questions Submitted by: February 27, 2024

Proposals Due: March 15, 2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

I. RFP Issuer Information

The issuer of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is the Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) d/b/a Central Western Maine Workforce Initiatives. CWMWDB serves the counties of Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset in the State of Maine. A non-profit 501(c)3 workforce development organization, CWMWDB's mission is to champion a workforce system that meets the needs of employers and job seekers in its 5-county region. Its work is to engage with industry and educational partners to create a highly trained, educated, and diverse workforce that is prepared for the high demand-high wage jobs offered in the region. This will create a strong, vibrant, sustainable economy that generates growth for employers and creates more opportunities for job seekers. A strong economy leads to improved quality of life for all residents of Central/Western Maine.

The CWMWDB website is located at www.cwmwdb.org. The website will be the sole mode of communication between the CWMWDB and potential bidders. Interested parties can always visit the website www.cwmwdb.org during the procurement period to view additional information and answers to bidder questions.

II. Procurement Timeline

Release Date: February 16, 2024
Question Deadline: February 27, 2024
Question Responses Posted to website: February 29, 2024
Proposal Deadline: March 15, 2024

III. Purpose and Background

The purpose of this RFP is to connect disconnected youth, ages 16-24, who are unemployed or underemployed to the training and support services needed to find jobs that match their skills, interests and geographic area. These jobs/careers should be with regional employers offering good wages, benefits, and the opportunity of upward mobility.

Maine is experiencing a historically low unemployment rate. There are two jobs for every one unemployed person. Maine has an aging population with the 55+ demographic outnumbering the prime working age and 25 and under demographic. Maine's school population has dropped 6% in the last 10 years, and the state has the 5th lowest birthrate in the nation. Yet, job growth continues.

Employer payrolls reached 646,900 at the end of 2022, representing the highest number of jobs on record in Maine. In 2022, there were 16,900 more jobs than there were one year ago. In November 2023, 3,800 jobs were added; 6,000 from September to November; 9,700 for the year. The Healthcare & Social Assistance sector needs to fill 7,000 of its 108,000 positions. Clean energy employers in Maine are projecting job growth over the next several months and 60% of employers have had difficulty filling open positions. Maine is currently projected to have an average shortfall of 3,240 workers in the top broadband occupations. In order to maintain a healthy economy for the CWMWDB region, no one can remain on the sidelines anymore.

Thirteen percent of the CWMWDB region's population lives in poverty, while 15.7% receive SNAP benefits. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau map of the United States displaying the poverty rate for people under age 18 by county, Somerset County's rate is 17.6 to 23.1, and the other four counties in the region are 12.2 to 17.5. The labor force participation rate overall is 81.3%, slightly lower than the state's figure. However, Somerset County is 10 percentage points below the state. The CWM region also has a higher percentage of disconnected youth (16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force) than the state, which accounts for 626 people. And finally, 56% of the region's population has either a high school diploma or some college but no degree, which could affect the type of employment they are seeking.

This region needs to engage with the next generation of the workforce in meaningful and innovative ways. For this reason, CWMWDB is seeking a company that can design a marketing campaign geared toward youth ages 16-24.

IV. Scope of Work

The campaign resulting from this RFP process shall include:

- Develop a strategic marketing and outreach plan to connect unemployed or underemployed disconnected youth (not in school) ages 16-24 in the five counties served by CWMWDB. The goal is to create a referral pipeline to CWMWDB's service provider, Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) that will net 100 participants. The plan should include the projected number of people who will respond to a call to action needed to meet the enrollment goal.
- Plan and conduct focus groups with targeted youth in each of the five counties.
- Create materials and messaging outlined in the strategic marketing and outreach plan.
- Implement the use of created materials to meet the goals outlined in the strategic marketing and outreach plan.
- Provide logistic services for a region-wide one day workshop for front line staff of all WIOA required partners.
- Develop a series of reports to track effectiveness of each element presented in the plan. Mandatory reports will include number of individuals reached, page views (mobile vs. desktop), clicks-to-call, form submissions, geographic hot spots, and popular SEO terms to target.

Development of a strategic marketing and outreach plan:

Historically, federal dollars that fund Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) workforce development programs have not been used for marketing purposes. The board recently received a grant that allows for such activities. Due to the decrease in the working population and the increase in available jobs, it is important to find people unemployed or underemployed, who can join the labor force in the Central Western Maine region. Due to a higher-than-average number of disconnected youth in the region, the effort should target this population.

The plan should include a call to action where youth referrals can be made and tracked. Outreach efforts may include: paid radio spots; PSAs on radio stations; "on-air" interview; targeted ads via geofencing on social media (TikTok is excluded), streaming TV, retargeting apps; launch and utilization of a new website; audio and video content creation; messaging assistance; handouts; and graphic design. This will generate the necessary number of referrals to net at least 100 registered participants into the WIOA employment programs. Please define the number of referrals needed to net 100 participants and why. Include examples of any past campaigns, where this ratio of referrals to enrolled was met or exceeded.

Focus groups:

Hearing from the targeted population is critical in designing an effective plan. Many of the youth that are eligible for WIOA services come from low-income households and have experienced barriers to finding and taking advantage of training and employment opportunities. They may have limited access to the internet and use only a mobile device for connectivity. Transportation is usually a huge barrier. How does this population gather information? What language resonates with them? What are their concerns with the workforce environment and what incentives/supports would help them enter the workforce? A monetary incentive should be built into the budget for participants who attend a focus group. The successful bidder will work in conjunction with board and service provider staff to find participants.

Creative development:

All tangible elements outlined in the plan will be created and implemented by the successful bidder. Both design and implementation costs should be contained within the budget. While all examples listed under “Development of a strategic marketing and outreach plan” are not required, an informed explanation should accompany the reason for choosing the communication vehicle(s). Any materials should adhere to standard accessibility guidelines and should not exceed a ninth (9th) grade reading level.

Implementation:

All elements outlined in the plan should have the timeline, specific outlets, and costs associated with their implementation.

Provide logistics services for a region-wide workshop:

WIOA identifies several agencies and programs that are required partners in a workforce ecosystem. Whether these partners provide duplicative or unique services, all should work together to braid resources that will benefit a participant. There are thirteen entities that reside in the CWMWDB region, all with front line staff that provide workforce services to the population. CWMWDB will plan a one-day workshop to bring front line staff of required and other interested partners together to learn of all the resources in the region and how they can be deployed in a braided manner to create the best outcome possible for each participant. The successful bidder will provide logistical support, such as location and food service with associated costs. CWMWDB and its partners will develop the programming.

Reporting structure:

To determine the effectiveness of the strategy and outreach, a reporting structure needs to be developed to guide a weekly discussion of progress. The matrix should include progress toward the goal of overall referrals and the effectiveness of the strategies employed. As defined under the Scope of Work, mandatory reports will include number of individuals reached, page views (mobile vs. desktop), clicks-to-call, form submissions, geographic hot spots, and popular SEO terms to target.

V. Contract Term

CWMWDB is seeking a cost-efficient proposal to provide services as defined in the RFP, for the anticipated contract period of April 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. Please note that these dates may be adjusted, as necessary, in order to comply with all procedural requirements associated with the RFP and the contracting process. The actual contract start date will be established by a completed and approved contract. CWMWDB anticipates making one award as a result of the RFP process.

VI. Disclaimers and General Provisions

- ✓ Bidders are advised that the only mode of communication with CWMWDB is to submit questions via email to workforce@cwmwdb.org by February 21, 2024 and questions will be answered on the CWMWDB website by February 26, 2024.
- ✓ This RFP does not commit the CWMWDB to award a contract.
- ✓ The CWMWDB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, and to accept or reject portions of proposals received based on scoring criteria (Section XII. Evaluation and Award) and RFP requirements.
- ✓ The bidder understands that the pricing contained within the proposal will remain valid for a period of 90 days from the date and time of the bid opening. The final contract award amount will be negotiated with the successful bidder.
- ✓ No costs will be paid to cover the expense of preparing a proposal package, negotiating a contract, or for appeals.
- ✓ All data, material, and documentation originated and prepared by the bidder pursuant to the contract shall belong exclusively to the CWMWDB and be subject to disclosure under public records and/or the Freedom of Information Act.

VII. Eligible Applicants

Bidders may be a single entity, public, private, or non-profit organization/business. When considering a bidder, the CWMWDB will consider the bidder's reputation in the community, the depth of the bidder's understanding of and experience with not-for-profit organizations and federal reporting requirements, the bidder's demonstrated ability to provide the services requested in a timely manner, and completion of requirements outlined in this RFP.

VIII. Written Proposal Requirements

Electronic and mail-in proposals will be accepted. Complete proposals can be mailed to the address on Page 1 or emailed to workforce@cwmwdb.org by 11:59 pm on March 15, 2024. No proposals will be accepted after this date and time. The bidder must organize their proposal based on the following outline:

- A. Title Page:
State the bidder's organization name, chief executive name and title, address, phone number, email address, name and title of the main point of contact for the proposal, address, phone number and email address.
- B. Overview of the Organization:
Bidders must describe their qualifications and skills that attest to their ability to provide the services outlined in the Scope of Work. Bidders must include examples of past projects which demonstrate their experience and expertise in performing these services and their experience in reaching this demographic, as well as highlighting their stated qualifications and skills.
- C. Subcontractors:
If subcontractors are to be used, including consultants, bidders must provide a list that specifies the name, address, phone number, contact person, and a brief description of the subcontractors' organizational capacity and qualifications.

- D. Proposed Services:
Provide complete responses to the areas outlined in Scope of Work, Section IV.
- E. Budget & Delivery Schedule:
Include a budget that covers the entire period of performance. The budget proposal must include the costs necessary for the Bidder to fully comply with the RFP requirements. Bidder must provide a detailed breakdown including personnel, materials, and implementation of creative materials. The bidder must also outline the timeframe for deliverables.
- F. Attachments:
Attach the following documents to the proposal:
a. Appendix A: Debarment, Performance, and Non-Collusion Certification
- G. Format:
Proposals must be:
a. Single spaced;
b. Typed on Letter size, single sided paper;
c. One-inch margins (1");
d. Times New Roman Font;
e. Size twelve (12) font;
f. Sequentially numbered pages; and
g. Maximum of ten (10) pages, not including attachments.

For a submitted application to be withdrawn, a written request must be submitted to the CWMWDB to the address on Page 1. The decision to allow a withdrawal is at the sole discretion of the CWMWDB. If a bidder does not withdraw a proposal by the due date, the proposal becomes property of the CWMWDB and may be subject to public disclosure per the Freedom of Information Act.

IX. Evaluation and Award

An evaluation team, composed of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the proposals in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFP. Officials responsible for making decisions on the award selection will ensure that the selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who are capable of meeting the specifications. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in review of the proposals and to ensure that the contract is awarded to the Bidder whose proposal provides the best value to CWMWDB.

CWMWDB reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with Bidders, if needed, to obtain clarification of information contained in the proposals received. CWMWDB may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Changes to proposals, including updating or adding information, will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process and, therefore, Bidders must submit proposals that present their rates and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible. The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which each proposal meets the criteria in the RFP. Decisions shall be made in a timely fashion.

Scoring Weights	
1. Organization Qualifications and Experience, Section VIII B	20
2. Scope of Work, Section IV	40
3. Budget & Delivery Schedule, Section VIII E	20
4. Adherence to Proposal Requirement, Section VIII	10
5. Adherence to Formatting, Section VIII G	10
SECTION TOTAL POINTS	100
Section XI – Written Proposal Requirements	

Award of the contract resulting from this RFP will be based upon the most responsive bidder whose offer will be the most advantageous to the CWMWDB in terms of cost, functionality, and other factors as specified in this RFP.

The CWMWDB reserves the right to

- ✓ reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential bidder;
- ✓ Accept other than the lowest priced offer; and
- ✓ Award a contract on the basis of initial offers received, without discussions or requests for best and final offers.

A proposal may be deemed “non-responsive” if any of the required information is not provided, the submitted price is found to be excessive or inadequate as measured by criteria stated in the RFP, or the proposal is clearly not within the scope of the project described and required in the RFP. CWMWDB reserves the right to cancel this procurement at any time, for any reason.