

# MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

One-Stop Career Center Operator Service Request For Proposal

## Bidder's Conference

439 South Union Street, Suite 102, Lawrence, MA

October 27, 2016

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**OSCC Operator Services RFP  
Bidder's Conference  
Questions & Answers**

**The RFP asks that the bidder submit job descriptions, yet the winning bidder will keep most of the current staff; how does that work? Is there an assumption that 70% of staff will be kept in current positions or could one conceivably be asking staff to take on a different position?**

We have two requirements in the RFP. The first requirement is that any selected One-Stop Career Center Operator agree to interview all incumbent staff who apply for employment with the provider. The second requirement is that no more than 30% of career center municipal staff be terminated within the first year of chartering. There is no assumption that 70% of the staff will stay in their current positions.

**The bidder will be inheriting the 255 Essex Street site; can you tell us about the structure, amenities, parking, etc.**

The building is called the City Hall Annex and it is a four story structure. The Career Center will occupy the first three floors, about 15,500 ft2, and the MVWIB the fourth floor. It has an elevator and a stairwell. The City has replaced its roof and will be changing the heating and cooling system and making some space and cosmetic changes. There are two sides with windows and two sides of the building with no windows. It is set up for a mix of offices and cubicles; we have found that the cubicle space may be a bit smaller than the existing open space that we have now. Staff and customers will be parking at the public garage or on the street. The parking garage monthly rate for staff is \$25 per month and the hourly cost for customers is \$2.00 per hour.

**Is the rental rate established by the City?**

Yes. That is public information because we had an RFP that had three respondents. The City rate is lower. It's per square foot cost is \$11.92 and it includes utilities. Utilities not included are telecom systems and IT connections.

**For budgeting purposes, is it recommended that prospective bidders use the \$11.92 rate? Are there any projections on year 2, 3, 4?**

The City has declared no increase schedule right now. It can be assumed that \$11.92 will be the cost for the first couple of years.

**Is there any physical security for the 255 Essex Street site?**

No. The closest physical security will probably be next door at the Lawrence Public School when it opens its family resource center and admin offices. We are considering camera installations before the new career center charter begins in July 2017. There will probably be some sort of emergency security system; there is already a door alarm for when we are not there. We'll probably have another alarm for when we're there working with customers.

**Will the lists of current staff salaries be available?**

It will be provided during the transition period between the declaration of the awardee and the awardee's assumption of the charter. Aggregate totals were provided in the RFP.

**Is the understanding that through this process there is an opportunity to restructure the staffing, such that what currently is in place now may have no bearing on what the bid looks like?**

Yes.

**If a bidder restructures staffing and creates new positions; everyone is given an opportunity to apply for those positions and if the staff turns it down, would that staff be considered part of the 30%?**

That may or may not be the case, depending on the job and type of salary offered. Normally, if a similar position is refused, it is not a lay-off but a resignation.

**What is the current qualification requirement for staff?**

The vast majority of employees have college degrees. Those without college degrees have enough experience to make them contributing staff.

**Where did the 'no more than 30% of career center municipal staff will be terminated' come from since it is not WIOA law?**

That number was found to be appropriate by the MVWIB and CEO. Fewer lay-offs minimize service disruption. The City is also self-insured for UI and UI payments will come from a fund that we do not want to reduce to zero. It was grown over the last 17 years to cover accrued vacation and sick time.

**Are the staff unionized?**

Yes. City employees and state employees have separate unions.

**If prospective bidders have to keep 70% of the current staff, does that mean staff will retain their union status? Has there been communication with the union about all of this?**

Continuing with a union does not necessarily follow. If the awardee is not a municipality then the staff's union would terminate because they are represented by a municipal union.

**Who are the mandated RFP development and review partners?** The MVWIB Board Executive Committee, three other private sector WIB members and the Career Center partners will be the reviewers. WIOA does not require it but Massachusetts mandates Career Center partner participation. We will in any case have a 51% private sector participation in the review team.

**How many review partners do you have now?**

There are currently seven mandated partners as well as our five member executive committee. We've asked for three additional private sector board members to participate.

**Do the mandated partners have any obligated financial contribution to the Career Center?**

As of this time, no. The expectation is that there be some sort of contribution but it is no longer simply cash, it could be in kind, accepting referrals, internet connectivity etc.

**How many DCS staff are onsite?**

The current budget supports 18 DCS staff. The number will go down to 11 in January if there is no additional funding.

**How is the MVWIB perceiving the submission documents to incorporate the DCS partner services?**  
Excellent question but I don't have the answer. Please highlight it as something to be answered.

**How does that reconcile with any potential conflict with having required mandated partners being reviewers?**

No mandated partner that is submitting a proposal will be part of the review team.

**If prospective bidders work with the mandated partners right now, will those mandated partners be reviewing the proposals?**

Yes. All bidders need to attempt to create partnerships with the required Career Center partners. However, no partner that will be submitting a proposal will participate in the review committee. There will inevitably be confusion because of the coincidental requirement that we plan career center services with Career Center partners who may also be mandated OSCC proposal reviewers. Some required review partners will be from elsewhere to reduce conflicts.

**Should conversations with mandated partners be broad for now until an OSCC operator is chosen?**

Yes.

**Will there be another data system other than MOSES?**

Not at this time but our RFP mentions MOSES updates and the possibility of using one or more other systems.

**Is WIOA requiring re-chartering every four years?**

Yes. There will also be annual reviews under the four year charter.

**What is your definition of a collaborating organization?**

For now, we'll go with what DCS lists as career center partners. But some vendors may propose to offer a variety of complimentary or separate services that are not listed by DCS.

**On attachment A 'Letter of Intent to Bid', do you fill out the collaborating organization piece if you are going to bid as a consortium entity?**

Yes. But the lead operator can submit a LOI and then develop a consortium. The requirement is for the lead to get a letter in on time.

**Considering prospective bidders have to work with DCS partners, keeping proprietary information proprietary in terms of operations and operations status; how is that factored in when working on the budget process for the bid when there are shared cost associated potentially with space?**

That's another difficult question. But it behooves all bidders to speak with DCS or its regional staff to get at least preliminary information on how that works. The DCS budget is in a state of flux. We may be losing more than a third of their staff. Overhead costs are shared so if they have fewer staff then the regional operator must pick up more of the costs. So DCS budgets will impact the funding available to the OSCC operator. But there is a historical ebb and flow. A lot of weight is given to the budget although it's somewhat unpredictable. But we kept a high point score to help check whether applicants know what they are doing.

**Can we assume that when the review committee looks at the budget, they will be looking to see if it makes logical sense and that the costs are reasonable?**

Yes, exactly that. We are looking for reasonableness and what makes sense, not a budget prediction.

**Does the budget included in the RFP include training dollars?**

No.

**Does the budget include Youth allocations?**

Yes. In other areas, the Youth allocations are not automatically given to the Career Center. That has been the case here. We think it makes sense to keep part of it at the career center because the youth category goes up to age 24 under WIOA. But in any scenario, in the future charter, our allocations will become much more performance-based.

**In the budget amount, what are the funds referred to as 'Other'?**

It's a catch-all to address the unforeseen contracts we received over the course of a year, normally from Federal of State discretionary funds.

**In the budget amount, what are the funds referred to as 'NDWG'?**

Those are National Emergency Grants (NEGs) and such.

**Are there going to be any unusual requirements other than a good selection process for bidders who are currently ITA providers and/or are partners with the WIB in other consortiums?**

The nature, height and depth of the firewall between the career center and trainer activities has yet to be determined but there will need to be a firewall.

**Does the Career Center pay a MOSES fee? If so, is there anticipation of the fee going up?**

Yes, a base and user fee. It's inevitable for things to go up but that budget item is a small part of the overall budget.

**On page 10, there is discussion about allocation of funds going 85% to the Lawrence Career Center and about 15% to the Haverhill-based center; how do we rectify the other conflict that relates to the community college being the landlord to the Haverhill-based site?**

The landlord status of the community college may not last much longer; that will part of the firewall issue. At this time, it's hard to justify continuing to stay at the Haverhill college site. If the situation drastically changes for the better, perhaps they will continue to do so, no matter who is the successful bidder.

**Is there a lease agreement with the community college for the Haverhill-based center?**

It is tenant at will license with a year's notice needing to be given from either party.

**On page 16 it states 'MVWIB monitoring of Career Center activities will include mention of staff performance that will be included in annual staff review metrics compiled by the OSCC Operator'; because the Career Center has a mandated partner onsite that also has staff, does that stipulation also apply to DCS staffing?**

DCS staff have annual evaluations. Something akin to that will be required of Career Center and WIB staff who are not evaluated now. This may be a challenge because the current union agreement with municipal staff supposedly prohibits it. But it's an issue that will be addressed in a charter with either the current operator or the new one. DCS staff have a separate union that we don't deal with and they are also supervised in part out of Boston. It is unlikely that DCS reviews will include input from MVWIB monitoring.

**Does the MVWIB oversee or supervise the Career Center?**

The MVWIB oversees it.

**The understanding is that the CBA doesn't deny the ability of an operator to do performance reviews, it's just not tied to wage increase; is this true?**

That may be true. In either case, annual reviews have not been provided to municipal staff.

**The submission forms are on PDF file; will potential bidders get the forms in Word format?**

Yes. Once letters of intent are received by the City of Lawrence, Rita Brousseau will provide those bidders with forms in Word format.

**There is no guidance as to what the reviewers will find advantageous, highly advantageous, and not advantageous by components; how do bidders have a level of confidence that reviewers, with potentially no experience, will provide a fair and equitable review?**

We are not going to have the stated criteria in place for the review but will instead give percentage values to the different proposal sections. Their relative weight is included in the RFP. Staff cannot score but hope to be present to help the reviewers understand things as best possible.

**What are you looking for in section II of the 'Narrative Section Scoring' considering the bidders are inheriting one site and proposing a second site?** It's a small scoring portion because of that fact. But proposers can discuss client flow and such in Lawrence and Haverhill. Mention of other sites in Haverhill may also be worthwhile.

**How can we look at Haverhill closely since it is stated in the RFP that the actual allocations percentage is mandated by the Board?**

It doesn't have to be the current percentage, the Board may increase that number as situations warrant.

**How will the Haverhill-based center allocation increase with limited and reduced funding?**

The site cost will have a bearing on whatever happens.

**Does this bid have to assume the cost of the Haverhill-based center?**

We want to maintain a presence in Haverhill.

**On page 10 of the RFP, it says 'the MVWIB reserves sole discretion to maintain or make any change to the allocation break-out'; is this language inaccurate? If not, can you clarify?**

Charter discussions will include budget negotiations. The Board recommends a budget that the CEO approves or disapproves it annually until a final decision is made. Funding is driven by the Feds, the State and by our ability to successfully apply for discretionary grants. Unemployment rates effect it. The past budget and performance numbers in the RFP are three year averages.

**Assuming the bidder looks at the Haverhill-based center and suggests a new location, can they enter into a lease agreement?**

No. All the bidder can do is plan, suggest, and show a willingness to explore options but no definite agreements or statements can be made until charter negotiations are complete.

**Can you clarify the first paragraph of page 19 of the RFP; what is the understanding?**

We cannot allow a large amount of boilerplate language be included in MVWIA proposal. For example, national career center service providers cannot simply cut and paste lots of statements from proposal applicable to other regions. We should instead receive proposals that relate to the uniqueness of this region, its assets and challenges. We are basically saying don't copy and paste from other proposals; proposals should instead be tailored to our specific region.

**Is there an area in the RFP response that captures that proposals should be tailored to a regions specific situation?**

We didn't include a statement of need in the RFP since successful proposals will articulate service plans designed for this region and its principal cities, with Lawrence being foremost amongst them.

**Has there been any pressure or outcries from the other cities the MVWIB serves, other than Lawrence, Methuen and Haverhill?**

The only City that has made a couple of attempts to have more specific municipal services is Newburyport but they have so far been cordial.

**Will the MVWIB ensure that no review committee member belongs to the Northern Essex Community College Board of Trustee and that there's no other conflict of interest, such as vendor relationships?**  
Insofar as we're aware of them, yes.

**Is the bidder's conference a mandatory event?**

No.

**Will the questions and answers be posted?**

Yes. The final Q&A's will be posted on Friday, November 18, 2016 but some may be posted before then.

**Will bidders get the letter of intent in Word document format?**

The City of Lawrence may email everyone who downloaded the RFP from the City of Lawrence website a Word document version. If it is not sent out, please use the pdf version included in the RFP or create your own MS Word version.