**ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**RFP – TITLE I YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE**

**BIDDERS CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL**

**June 22, 2020 @ 10:00 am**

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Present:**

Potential Proposers: Alexa Backus – St. Lawrence County Youth Bureau and David Coryer – Coryer Staffing.

WIOA Staff: Penny Taylor, Larry Fetcie and Rebekah Zuhlsdorf

WDB Staff: Barb Lashua, Executive Director

OVERVIEW:

In school youth are youth who are attending high school or college full time, age 14 not to exceed the age of 21. Out of school youth are youth between the ages of 16 and 24. 75% of funding received has to be spent on out of school youth, making that population the main focus of the youth programming.

The program also works with Adults starting at age 18 and Dislocated Workers. Services are provided to help them find employment, better their current employment situation, obtain the skills they may need or further education to acquire a specific employment opportunity. Federal funding is received by the New York State Department of Labor and then allocated to the local areas to deliver these programs. With Youth funding, the local areas are encouraged to have contracts with providers to help provide the required 14 youth elements.

Youth receive various services from basic career counseling by staff to tuition assistance to work experience. Tuition assistance is for occupational skills, which can include BOCES offerings, lineman school, CDL training, CNA training and other health care related fields. We receive funding to pay outside agencies to provide those occupational skills either at the college level or through vocational training.

Work experience and hands on skill development is the focus of this RFP. Paid work experience participants are temporarily placed at a worksite so that they can develop the skills they need to obtain unsubsidized employment. A required part of work experience is measurable skills gain. These gains need to be measurable where you can see the progress and outcomes. Worksites can be a public, not profit or for profit agency. Part of the Work Experience element includes on the job training. On the job training is when an employer will hire the individual and the employer will be reimbursed a percentage of the wages, typically 50% for a predetermined period of time. This gives the employer time to work with the individuals so that they obtain the occupational skills they will need to keep the employment.

We are tracked by the New York State Department of Labor on the progress of participants. We document when someone completes their programming and if they are employed at the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit of the program. Participant’s earnings are also tracked. The desired outcome would be to see an increase in earnings as employment progresses. Staff works closely with individuals enrolled in the program for the duration of the services provided plus at least a year after for follow up services.

It’s stated in the RFP that the St. Lawrence County staff will do the enrollment process to determine eligibility. Then working with the contractor an individual service strategy (ISS) is developed. ISS is a detailed blueprint of what the youth goals are and how they will be obtained within the youth programming. The ISS identifies the elements that the youth is going to be receiving, describes how that’s going to be delivered and who is going to be providing the particular services. The ISS can be modified or update as needed.

**QUESTION #1** – Is it appropriate to help an In School Youth obtain a high school diploma or equivalency with tutoring or other services along those lines?

**ANSWER #1** - The main goal on a service plan for an in school youth would be for them to obtain their high school education, either through the school diploma or an outside source like the TASC. If it is proposed to offer those services it has to be demonstrated and measured. Most of our in school youth participants are receiving those services through the school district. Work experience programming is allowed with in school youth participants, but not to exceed 25% of our total youth budget, or we don’t have to use any of that 25%.

**QUESTION #2** – Can 100% be spent on Out of School Youth?

**ANSWER #2** - Yes. 100% could be spent on Out of School work experience however it’s only required to spend a minimum of 20% of your budget on work experience.

When the youth is enrolled in program that is when their status of in school or out of school is determined. If you enroll and provide service before the youth graduates they are an in school youth for the whole duration of services, their status does not change. If you wait to provide their first services after they graduate they will be an out of school youth.

**QUESTION #3** - Would you want to enroll them after they graduate for them to qualify as an out of school youth?

**ANSWER #3** - Yes, once you enroll someone they stay at that status. Only 25% of spending can be spent on in school youth.

FISCAL:

WIOA funding is monitored by the Department of Labor. We would like to see invoices done on a monthly basis. Invoices need to have the backup documentation for the expenses that were billed for. We are willing to help with any forms that are currently used from other contracts or that we have used that Department of Labor has approved of. A cost allocation plan will need to be in place, it needs to state how you plan on breaking out expenses that will be billed to us for reimbursement. If staff salaries are part of the budget they will need to maintain a time distribution sheet and an activity log, which should match on a daily basis. Only time spent working on the WIOA program is time that can be reimbursed. A site visit will be scheduled at the end of the program year to perform a financial management review. Staff will have to review costs to ensure they are allowable, justified, accurate and documented. It should consist of one day onsite with the rest being done from the office. Our completed review will then be reviewed by the Department of Labor.

A monthly desk review is done to check invoices. A payment cannot be issued if the documents do not reflect what was billed. Reimbursements are based on what is stated in the budged submitted with the proposal. If you include any cost that are not allowed in the contract they also cannot be reimbursed. If the appropriate documentation is not provided when the financial management review is conducted, then there is a possibility you would have a disallowed cost in which you will have to pay back to the WIOA program.

St. Lawrence County staff will be doing the reporting to the New York State both for fiscal and programming. We use the One Stop Operating System (OSOS) for the programming. With the enrollment information and updates imported into the system, performance reports can be gathered for participants. St. Lawrence County staff will do all the data entry into OSOS and will monitor the recording of the fiscal.

**QUESTION #4** - Do you find that worksites and employers are willing to accept Out of School Youth for this program? Do you anticipate some increased concerns from worksites because of COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing?

**ANSWER #4** – Prior to COVID-19 we have many worksites that are very accepting and open to taking the Out of School Youth. Worksites supervisors take on a mentoring role and want to have a good impact on the youth during their work experience. On an average we place 150 youth for the Summer Youth Program and have plenty of worksites to place them at. In March because of the COVID-19 outbreak we suspended our work experience participants and we have not received guidance as of yet to when they can start back up.

SKILLS GAINS:

New York State monitors the skills gains. If services are proposed they have to be provided in a manner that can be documented. Work experience skills gains can be documented by employee evaluations done by the worksite supervisors. An evaluation would show if the participant has improved during the duration of their work experience. All work experiences are required to have an education component, which can be provided by other agencies. There can be offerings outside of the actual work experience that can be part of the participants plan. Financial literacy is a mandatory component and we have local providers (Credit Unions, Seaway Valley Prevention Council, Cornell Cooperative Extension) who provide those services as they are required. This makes it so participants receive some educational component with the work experience.

**QUESTON #5** - You stated earlier in the year there was a reduction in spending and budgets being reduced, is that a true reduction of funding in this RFP or is that not the case?

**ANSWER #5** - We took a 16.5% reduction in funding overall for PY20, which includes youth, adult and dislocated worker funding.