

Dept of General Administration Customer Survey Work Request

**REQUEST FOR SURVEYS TO MEASURE THE WORKFORCE TRAINING NEEDS
AND PRACTICES OF EMPLOYERS IN WASHINGTON STATE
AND
SATISFACTION OF WASHINGTON EMPLOYERS WHO HIRE PARTICIPANTS
FROM WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
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BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR WORK REQUEST

REQUEST FOR SURVEYS TO MEASURE THE WORKFORCE TRAINING NEEDS AND PRACTICES OF EMPLOYERS IN WASHINGTON STATE AND SATISFACTION OF WASHINGTON EMPLOYERS WITH TRAINEES FROM WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

1. OVERVIEW

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) surveys employers every two years to assess their workforce training needs and practices. Results are used to assess the difficulty Washington employers have in finding qualified applicants, estimate future needs for skilled employees, and identify types of training that employers provide themselves. The results of this survey have been used to prepare the biennial reports: *Workforce Training Supply, Demand, and Gaps* and *Workforce Training Results: An Evaluation of Washington State's Workforce Training System*. They are also used in the preparation of the Workforce Board's Strategic Plan: *High Skills, High Wages: Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development* and in the strategic plans of the Workforce Development Councils serving 12 local workforce areas in Washington state. The Governor and state Legislature also use the survey analysis results to prepare the budget related to workforce development in the state.

An additional survey component collects employer satisfaction information. Employers who hired participants from a variety of programs are asked if they were satisfied with the skills of those workers. Those programs are:

- High school career and technical education programs
- Community and technical college vocational programs
- Four-year colleges and universities programs
- Adult Basic Education programs
- Private career schools programs
- Apprenticeship programs
- Workforce Investment Act (WIA) federally funded programs.
- WorkSource Employment Placement programs

Answers to these questions are used in state performance accountability measures and planning processes for the listed programs.

The Workforce Board seeks a contractor to administer two separate but related surveys: one to obtain needs and practices information from a large sample of employers, and the second to measure employer satisfaction with trainees hired within the past year. The needs and practices surveys will be used to identify the majority of the sample for the satisfaction survey.

A. Background

The Workforce Board has contracted for this series of surveys every two years since 1995. The 1995 survey involved a mail-out to 8,500 employers with a 22 percent response rate (25 percent for those with valid addresses). The 1997 survey, administered in the fall of 1997, involved a mail-out to 8,624 employers, with an 8 percent response rate (10 percent for those with valid addresses). A number of factors were identified as contributing to the low response rate, including survey length, bad address data, and lack of an explicit survey follow-up strategy.

In 1999, for the first time, small firms were included (prior to 1999, only firms with five or more employees were included). In addition, the survey sample was redesigned to allow separate analyses for each of 12 workforce development areas. This raised the number of surveys mailed out to 12,500. A more extensive process produced 3,949 responses, a 31 percent response rate (37 percent for those with valid addresses). However, a large number of respondents expressed displeasure with the survey, particularly among the smallest firms.

In 2001, the survey was divided into three parts: 1) a needs and practices survey for employers with five or more employees; 2) an abbreviated needs and practices survey for employees with fewer than five employees; and 3) a customer satisfaction survey for employers who had hired program trainees within the last year. All three surveys were administered by mail, using the commercial employer database from InfoUSA for contact information for sample members. There were operational difficulties, and as a result only 2,405 responses were returned out of 12,000 surveys mailed, for a 19.2 percent response rate.

Improvements were made in the 2003 Survey, with much better results. The 2003 survey continued the use of InfoUSA's employer contact list, and use of a separate short-form needs and practices survey for small employers, and a separate telephone survey of employer satisfaction. Added components included an Association of Washington Business cover letter, telephone follow-up of responses, a toll-free line to call in, and a web survey option. The result was 2,968 responses out of 11,800 mailed for a 25 percent response rate.

The 2005 survey yielded 2,097 responses from 12,448 samples with a 17 percent response rate, due to a number of factors including the increased complexity of the survey, delay in production, and personnel turnover within the contractor firm.

The 2007 surveys were primarily conducted by mail, supplemented by phone and online options. The needs and practices survey yielded 2,091 completed responses out of 9,833 in the cleaned sample frame, for an improved response rate of 21 percent. This may have been affected by a reduction in the length of the survey from 2005. However, the refusal rate increased to 40 percent in 2007, compared to 35 percent in 2005 and 31 percent in 2003. The employer satisfaction survey drew most of its sample from employers who were identified as having hired program participants as part of the Needs and Practices survey. Some additional employer satisfaction sample was drawn from program records.

No substantial changes are anticipated for the 2009 process, other than possibly some additional outreach by board partners to improve response rates.

The number of employer satisfaction responses has varied over the years.

Number of employers answering satisfaction questions about:	1999 Survey	2001 Survey	2003 Survey	2005 Survey	2007 Survey
High school vocational education programs	326	407	337	285	311
Community or technical colleges	351	486	506	370	448
WIA/WorkSource/WDC	139	189	238	149	165
Private vocational/technical school	176	211	269	243	268
Apprenticeship programs	118	130	213	128	177
Adult basic skills programs (GED or ESL)	225	192	276	256	291
Four-year colleges & universities					575
WorkSource job placement programs					373
TOTAL program-specific responses	1335	1615	1839	1431	2608

* Note that because many employers had hired workers from more than one of these programs, the total number of employers surveyed about their satisfaction with workers is smaller than the number of program-specific responses: in 2007, the 2608 program-specific responses were gathered from 1,042 employers.

The Workforce Board analyzes data from these surveys using files supplied by the contractor. For example, results of the previous survey can be found in documents at:

http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs_Publications.asp

Results of the earlier surveys can be found at:

http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Pubs_PublicationsArchives.asp

The survey results appear in the “Workforce Training Results” documents, the “High Skills, High Wages” documents, as well as in the 2004 archived report on the Employer Survey.

1.2 Services to be purchased

This Work Request is issued through Department of General Administration for the purpose of acquiring the services of a qualified survey research firm to conduct field data collection of two major statewide surveys of employers.

A. The first survey would be a mail survey targeting a stratified random sample of employers, and measuring employer workforce training needs and practices. The Workforce Board would perform the sample selection and supply the list of firms to be contacted to the contractor. The survey would come in two formats, a short survey for employers with 4 or fewer employees and a long form for employers with 5 or more employees. It is anticipated that the contractor would also support web and phone options for respondents. The goal of this survey would be to obtain roughly 250 responses in each of 12 workforce development areas in order to be able to produce both WDA specific results as well as weighting those responses for results reflecting employer needs and practices statewide. The universe of employers would involve those with two or more employees. In addition to stratification for the 12 workforce areas, statewide results will be separately needed for 7 industries, and 4 employer size groups.

B. The second survey, to be administered by telephone, will be directed toward employers

who hired recent trainees, asking employers to evaluate their satisfaction with these recently hired trainees. Two options for identifying employers are available. One option is to survey employers whose responses to the needs and practices survey indicate that they hired trainees from the targeted programs during the previous year. Alternatively, the Workforce Board can supply lists of employers who appear to have hired trainees from the various programs during the year, based on program and employment records.

The goal for each of the eight training programs is to obtain about 300 responses statewide from employers who have recently hired program participants.

- C. The Workforce Board will provide the use of InfoUSA's 2007 Washington Business Directory, which contains employer names, addresses, contact information, industrial codes, and employer size information. The contact information provided in this database makes stratification, mail surveys, and telephone surveys possible. InfoUSA's 2007 database contained roughly 219,000 businesses, of which 131,000 had less than 5 employees.
- D. The bidder will be responsible for printing all survey booklets and envelopes required for all portions of the mail survey, and for postage and business reply mail processing and costs.
- E. The Workforce Board requires that the bidder deliver the survey results in the form of documented data files and Excel files suitable for efficient importation into SAS. The codebook or field service reports are part of the deliverables.
- F. Work is to begin in October 2009. Employers Needs Survey data must be available by mid-February 2010, and Employer Satisfaction Survey data must be available by mid-March 2010 for analysis and integration with other research.

The survey will be virtually identical to the previous one and therefore we do not plan any need for questionnaire design services, except as necessary to adapt the survey to the contractor's mailing and data entry processes. Copies of the surveys used in 2007 are attached.

Minimum Requirements

Candidate organizations must be registered (or be willing to become registered) to do business with Washington state, including having or obtaining a Washington universal business identification number, and have experience administering mail, phone and web surveys, obtaining and updating contact information as needed, surveying employers, and processing survey responses to produce analysis-ready data files.

The minimum requirements for each bidder are:

1. Availability of adequate staff and computer resources between October 15, 2009 and March 24, 2010, including any necessary subcontractors to perform and manage the work in a coordinated and effective manner.
2. Demonstrated effectiveness, as referenced in the proposal, in managing mail and

telephone surveys with employers on a scale similar to that described in this request.

3. Significant experience with computer databases and the capacity to handle the required volume of data collection, data cleaning and processing, and data reporting in an accurate and timely manner.
4. Ability to supply survey results in SAS data files, Excel files, or other database files that can be imported into SAS.

1.3 Period of Performance

The period of performance of any contract resulting from this Work Request is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about October 15, 2009 and be in force through June 2010. The contract length is set months beyond the product due date in order to reduce the administrative burden of extending the contract in the event of unforeseen complications. Amendments extending the listed product deadlines or the period of performance beyond June 2010, if any, shall be at the sole discretion of the Workforce Board and will be established in writing.

1.4 Funding and Method of Payment

The maximum level of funding available under the proposed contract is approximately \$163,000. Cost will be a major consideration in selecting the successful bidder.

The Workforce Board has prepared an estimated maximum budget based on the following assumptions:

Needs and Practices survey- Sampling, printing/ mailing/re-mailing:
- \$6.00 each for 10,000 sample members = \$60,000.

Needs and Practices survey - Administration follow-up and data entry
- \$17.00 per completed survey for 3,000 completions = \$51,000.

Note that vendors may propose compensation schedules that will vary depending on the number of completions obtained.

Satisfaction Phone Survey - Includes identification of eligible employers, survey administration, and data entry
- \$20.00 per completion for 1,500 completions = \$30,000.

In this estimate, an individual employer response was counted as one completion for this survey for each type of program trainee they hired and provided information about.

Note that vendor may propose compensation schedules that will vary depending on the number of satisfaction survey completions they obtain.

Separate deliveries of cleaned and documented analysis-ready files for the Needs and Practices survey and the Satisfaction survey at \$9,000 per file or \$18,000.

Potential vendors should produce their own cost estimates and propose a fee schedule that

includes a fixed cost per printing/ mailing per sample member, variable costs per completion for the Needs and Practices and Satisfaction surveys, and a fee for delivery of each of the two analysis files. The proposed rates should include the Department of General Administration's 2.5% fee for administration of the Customer Survey Services contract.

The Workforce Board will spend no more than \$163,000 on these survey efforts.

Payments will be made as phases of the project are completed. Vendor selection will be based, in part, on cost proposal, and vendors who can supply the proposed services at lower costs will have an advantage in selection.

1.5 Work Request Coordinator

Dave Pavelchek, at the Workforce Board, will be the work request coordinator for this activity.

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(e-mail is the preferred method of contact for record keeping, but call to verify that e-mail has been received in case our anti-spam software prevents delivery. To guarantee receipt of important documents such as the proposal and the data, physical copies are recommended.)

Mr. Pavelchek will be responsible for collecting any vendor questions regarding this work request, and will send answers to eligible vendors according to the schedule below. All vendors will receive all answers to all questions received. Mr. Bryan Wilson, Deputy Director, will be the alternative contact for this project, in case Mr. Pavelchek is not available. Mr. Wilson's office phone number and e-mail are:

(360) 753-0891, bwilson@wtb.wa.gov.

1.6 Submission of Proposals

Submissions are due no later than the close of business (5:00 PM) on **September 28, 2009**. Proposals may be mailed, hand delivered, e-mailed, or FAXed to the Workforce Board. The Workforce Board will make photocopies of the proposals for distribution to evaluators. Please make sure that your proposal may be easily and accurately photocopied for evaluators to review.

Late proposals will not be accepted and will be disqualified from further consideration.

The Workforce Board has disqualified late proposals in the past and plans to continue this practice, so please allow ample time for delivery of your proposal.

1.7 Schedule of Activities

The Survey is on a very tight schedule. Bidders should carefully consider this constraint.

September 8, 2009	Survey Services Work Request Issued
September 15, 2009	Last day for vendor questions to the Workforce Board
September 18, 2009	The Workforce Board completes responding to vendor questions
September 28 2009	Proposals Due
October 5-6 2009	Interview finalists (if needed)
October 8 2009	Announce Selected Proposal
October 15 2009	Work Request Activity Begins
November 5 2009	Initial Mail-out of Needs and Practices Survey
February 23 2010	Delivery of Employer Needs and Practices Survey results file
March 23 2010	Delivery of Employer Satisfaction Survey results file
April 5, 2010	Delivery of Survey Administration Report
June 30, 2010	Work Request Activities End

Required dates in bold; all others are suggested. The June 30, 2010 end date allows for wrap-up of survey activities if necessary.

2. PROPOSED WORK TASKS

The vendor will implement a survey of employer workforce training needs and practices using a sample supplied by the Workforce Board and a survey of employer satisfaction with workforce trainees using the second sample. The second sample (for employer satisfaction with program participants) will be identified in part from among the respondents to the needs and practices survey, and supplied in part by the Workforce Board from program records.

2.1 The Workforce Board will perform the following tasks associated with the survey effort:

1. The Workforce Board will supply draft questionnaires (very similar to previous versions which are attached) and approve revisions to those questionnaires. The Workforce Board will assist with telephone scripts necessary for identification of employers who have hired trained workers within the past year, for use in the satisfaction survey. The Workforce Board will produce weight for analysis.
2. The Workforce Board will supply an employer sample including contact information for the needs and practices survey and lists of employers who appear to have hired trainees in the past year.
3. The Workforce Board will provide a cover letter on letterhead for mailing with the survey, with an executive signature from either the Association of Washington Business (AWB) or the Workforce Board, depending on whether AWB will again agree to sponsor the survey.

2.2 The Contractor will perform the following required tasks:

1. Review and revise the proposed survey forms as necessary. The contractor should propose any survey modifications that would reduce the burdens placed on respondents while providing the information needed.
2. Prepare and print survey booklets, cover letters, and reply envelopes necessary to any mail survey effort, including follow-up mailings.
3. Implement a mail survey of employer workforce training needs and practices. A short form of the survey should be mailed to employers with fewer than 5 employees. This survey shall involve a system of reminders and re-mailing of survey forms to non-respondents in order to maximize response rates.
4. Implement a survey of employer satisfaction with trainees who participated in each of eight workforce development programs that (a) identifies employers who have hired such trainees and (b) obtains information on employer satisfaction with the skills of those trainees. The process of identifying employers who have hired trainees should assure that the respondent understands the type of trainee we are seeking to evaluate. Contractors may propose alternatives to telephone administration of this survey, based on their evaluation of the best methods.
5. Deliver analysis files containing the results of these two surveys in SAS or SAS compatible database formats such as Excel. Files should include variable names, formats and labels.
6. Provide a descriptive report on survey administration, response rate and other issues such as employer cooperation etc.

2.3 Proposed Schedule of deliverables

The bidder shall propose a schedule of administration and delivery of data to the Workforce Board based on the bidder's best judgment regarding its survey capabilities. Mandatory dates are listed below:

Mail-out of Employer Needs and Practices Survey	November 5, 2009
Delivery of Employer Needs and Practices Survey results file	February 23, 2010
Delivery of Employer Satisfaction Survey results file	March 23, 2010
Delivery of Survey Administration Report	April 5, 2010

Attachments:

Employer Long Form 07 Final Version.pdf
 Employer Needs-Short Form PROOF.pdf
 Employer Satisfaction Survey Instrument 2007.doc