

Employer Survey RFP #1-AEX-151  
Washington State Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board  
Responses to Queries from Potential Bidders  
September 17, 2009

In case of conflict between this document and the RFP, bidders should rely upon this later document which takes precedence over the RFP.

The Questions received by email and phone have been sorted into categories for compactness. The questions are preceded by alphanumeric codes based on the source and sequence of the question. All Workforce Board responses are preceded by ">>"

### BIDDER ELIGIBILITY

A-1 - As part of the registration process it is noted that firms need to obtain a 'uniform business identification #' from the State of Washington. Do you allow out-of-state companies to bid on your projects and receive an identification number. If yes, please direct me to the correct website to complete the process.

>> There is no intention to restrict this solicitation to in-state companies. To obtain a Washington UBI number, see:  
<https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/mls/IMBAHome.aspx>

B-1 - Under Minimum Requirements on page 4 it states that "Candidate firms must be eligible to perform work under the Department of General Administration's Convenience Contract #30800." Is this a list of pre-qualified vendors who can bid on Washington State contracts? If yes, how does one go about getting on the list?

>> This reference to an expired convenience contract has been deleted from the solicitation by Amendment #1.

### PREVIOUS SURVEYS

B-2 - Based on the included telephone questionnaire it appears that the Northwest Research Group conducted the 2007 research. Can you tell me who conducted the 1999, 2001, 2003 and 2005 research?

>> In 2003, 2005 and 2007, the surveys were conducted by Northwest Research Group: the firm that conducted the 2001 survey has since dissolved.

### PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

D-1 - Is there a specific protocol to follow for writing the proposal?

>> No

D-2 - Also, is there a certain number of copies (or originals) that you require?

>> Proposers should submit a single copy suitable for copying for multiple reviewers.

## SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

H-3 - What are the Office Use Only boxes used for on the survey forms? If these boxes were used for coding, could you tell us how many codes there are?

>> These boxes occur in the surveys in conjunction with “Other” options for text responses. We require full text entries for each of these “Other” categories to be included in the dataset. However, only one of these need be coded by the survey contractor: Question #4 on both the long and short forms should be coded to categories of occupations based on a coding guide to be provided by Workforce Board staff.

E-1 - The surveys included as part of the request appear to be in a format that would be scanned by a machine or software package. Are you able to provide information regarding the type of machine or software that has been used for this survey in the past so that compatible equipment can be used?

>> Proposers should plan to reformat the surveys to make them efficient for their data compilation processes. It is only the content questions that are required elements.

H-1 Could we get the actual Long survey form used in 2007? We are assuming that it was a scannable instrument.

>> We do not have a scannable version of the Long Form in our records.

H-2 Was a separate cover letter sent with the surveys or did the instruction information suffice?

>> A separate cover letter from the WTECB and/or the Association of Washington Business will be provided for inclusion. Whether any additional instructions etc should be printed on the survey document or on a separate sheet is at proposer’s discretion, as are printing and postage costs.

## SAMPLE

E-2 Does the InfoUSA 2007 Washington Business Directory contain the email addresses of the listed businesses, or just their mailing addresses and phone numbers?

G-2 Contact names: Who are the contact persons?

>> We expect the InfoUSA database to contain:

- Employer name
- Industry of employer
- Size
- One or more contact persons
- Address
- Phone number

Note that the person listed is often not the person who will end up being the respondent for that employer.

J-2 The RFP states that the 2007 InfoUSA directory will be used – should the proposal include getting current information from InfoUSA in our approach?

>> WTECB will purchase and provide access to InfoUSA contact information

F-3A Small versus larger employers: Has the Board set quotas for interviews from small versus larger companies (short vs. long questionnaire)?

F4 - Has the Board set specific quotas for industry or number of employees?

>> The Board classifies employers into four size categories:

- 1-4 employees
- 5-19 employees
- 20-99 employees
- 100+ employees

The smallest two categories are usually combined in reporting.

The seven Industry categories are:

- Agriculture & Food Processing
- Construction
- High Technology
- Manufacturing
- Services
- Trade
- Other

Mapping of standard industry codes to these categories will be provided by the Workforce Board.

The only strict numerical requirement is for representation by service delivery area. However, it is important that size and industry be significantly represented at the state level. Some deliberate stratified sampling may be required to obtain balance by size and industry, but this will be accomplished in drawing the sample, not by establishing numerical targets for these groupings. Although the contractor obtained over 160 responses from each of the seven categories, oversampling of Manufacturing, High Tech and Agriculture firms appears to have been required to obtain that result. Similarly, oversampling of larger employers may be necessary.

F-6 The RFP indicates that the Workforce Board can supply lists of employers who appear to have hired trainees from the various programs. Can you tell us how large a sample will be available for the Satisfaction Surveys? Will the sample identify the specific program utilized by each employer? Will the sample contain telephone numbers and email addresses for targeted employers?

G3 - Source of satisfaction sample –what contact info we get with program records?

G5 - Do agency placement records have email addresses?

H5 - Could the provided sample also include e-mail addresses?

>> WTECB can access and provide identification of employers reported as hiring through WorkSource programs, including both WIA programs and employment placement programs. In 2007, this process yielded about 7,000 employer records with contact information (email addresses cannot be assumed). When these employers were contacted, the screening questions were used to identify which if any of the programs they could recall hiring from, and satisfaction questions were asked about any recent WorkSource or non-WorkSource program hires that they recalled. Note that the person initially contacted through these employer records will often not be the eventual respondent for the employer.

## SURVEY MODE(S)

E-3 Would it be acceptable for at least a portion of the responses to the surveys be solicited by email, or is postal mail/phone the preferred method for this?

H-4 Would the Workforce Board be open to alternate methodologies for the employer Needs and Practices Survey if we believed that they would still achieve the desired response rate?

E-4 Besides the mail survey paper forms and potential alternate e-Mail survey approach we'd like to offer an alternate on-line survey route. This option would be presented for instance at the time that the paper form was received, and as a follow up to those not responding yet, in case they rather use the online version. Would this alternative be acceptable to offer?

>> Proposers are encouraged to propose different mixes of modes, reflecting what they view as effective methods for efficiently obtaining response from a representative sample of employers, so long as they will achieve the targeted numbers of responses and response rates comparable to the 2007 survey.

F-5 Can you tell us what proportion of the 2007 Needs surveys were conducted using each methodology – mail, web, telephone?

H-7 What was the number of completes on the Needs and Practice survey by each survey mode?

>> This information is not immediately available. However, the majority of the responses were received by mail. As can be seen from the next item below (G-4), at least a quarter of the responses appear to have come via email or telephone.

G-4 What proportion of satisfaction surveys were completed via web?

>> The satisfaction survey results included a total of 2,608 surveys between the eight programs from 1,042 individual employers. Among the two sample groups, 226 employers were contacted based on their participation in the Needs and Practices mail survey and 399 companies were contacted from the WTECB supplied Workforce training sample. Also, 417 employers, who completed the Needs and Practices survey online or over the telephone indicated that they hired trainees from the specified programs, completed the Employer Satisfaction survey at the same time.

F-3B Can you tell us what proportion of the completed interviews in 2007 were short vs. long interviews?

>> About 815 out of 2019 surveys were from employers with less than 20 employees. Further breakdown is not immediately retrievable.

## PROGRAMS TARGETED FOR SATISFACTION SURVEYS

E-5 In the estimated budget example given in the RFP, for the Satisfaction Phone Survey section, 1,500 survey completions was used as an example. However, there is stated eight training programs with a 300 target goal each = 2,400 target sector survey completions. Did the example assume that recently hired staff for a given organization may have typically come from more than one training source for some organizations? Or did we misunderstand assuming that 2,400 unique target survey results are indeed desired?

>> The RFP is not consistent. The correct information is as follows. The 2007 survey included samples of all eight groups as described on page 3 of the RFP, and was accomplished within a budget similar to that available this year. Proposals are requested that would achieve a number and distribution of responses similar to that achieved in 2007. Note that many employers

had hired from more than one of the targeted programs so that the number of employer/respondents was only about half the number of program-specific satisfaction responses.

F-7 Are there seven or eight programs?

>> There are eight programs, most of which provide both education or training and placement assistance. There is one program that primarily provides job placement and job search: WorkSource employment placement. This is one reason that in some of the published reports, there are graphs and tables with smaller numbers of "training programs."

## COSTS

E-6 We've heard conflicting viewpoints over the last year or two about the 2.5% Department of Administration fee being involved in projects or not. So as the RFP states here, are we indeed to include the 2.5% fee?

>> It appears that the General Administration fee is no longer required due to the changes effected by Amendment #1.

H-11 Does the maximum budget of \$163,000 include the US postage costs?

>> Contractor will be responsible for all postage and printing costs.

## ISSUES RELATED TO RESPONSE RATE

F-1 It appears that an advance letter was sent to targeted respondents in 2007. Does the Board anticipate the use of pre-notification letters for the current Needs survey? If yes, will these letters be sent only to employers who will receive the long questionnaire, or to all targeted respondents? Will the vendor be responsible for printing and mailing the advance letters?

>> It is up to proposers to decide whether mailing advance notification before sending the questionnaire is an effective use of resources. Vendors will be responsible for all printing and mailing costs, with the exception of items included in notices sent by Workforce Board partner organizations to generically encourage participation.

F-2 Will the incentive of free admission to the Workforce and Economic Development Leadership Conference again be offered as an incentive to participation? If yes, will this incentive be offered to all employers or only larger employers (5+ employees)?

>> No, this year the timing does not permit this option, as the conference will be held before survey is completed.

G-6 What were follow up procedures in previous survey?

H-8 How many follow up mailings were done in 2007?

>> At least one re-mailing of the questionnaire as well as reminder phone calls.

H-6 The number of attempts that were made to achieve a complete for the Satisfaction Phone Survey.

>> This information is not available.

J-1 The RFP states: No substantial changes are anticipated for the 2009 process, other than possibly some additional outreach by board partners to improve response rates. Could you let us know what you are thinking in terms of additional outreach efforts?

>> At present, the response stimulation under discussion is additional publicity through the publications and communications of employer organizations.

## PRODUCTS

H-10 Could you provide a description of the Survey Administration report?

>> The report should summarize the survey process, practices and methods used to contact employers. It should describe responses collected in terms of rates, response by sub-groups such as size and industry, response by mode if multi-modal. It should also identify issues that affected response rate or composition of response, patterns of difficulty with questions or process, or of ambiguous responses.

H-9 What type of capture is required of the comment area? Options would be to key the comment verbatim, code by theme, provide an image or a combination.

>> Complete text for mail and email responses. Interviewer summarization of remarks for phone interviews. The one exception is question #4 of both versions of the Needs and Practices survey, for which both text and coded values are required. The Workforce Board staff will provide a coding guide for the occupations reported in this item.

## SCORING

G-1 What criteria will be used in evaluating proposals?

>> A panel of research and program staff from the Workforce Board and the agencies operating these programs will review the proposals. Key elements and proposed weightings are:

- 15 General Experience with Research Surveys
- 10 Specific experience surveying employers/firms
- 25 Technical: survey modes, contact methods and methods to achieve response rates & balance
- 20 Quality of project management and output production plans
- 30 Cost