EASTERN KENTUCKY

EKCEP

CONCENTRATED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, INC.

Rolling Request for Proposals

to

Provide Information Technology (IT) Trainings and Job-Placement Services to Eastern Kentuckians.

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Services to be Performed
February 15, 2018 through June 6, 2019

Issued by

The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

January 19, 2018

I.   <u>EASTERN KENTUCKY C.E.P., INC.</u>

For almost 50 years, EKCEP — the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. — has served Eastern Kentuckians with exemplary training, employment, and workforce development programs to meet the region's changing needs and help its workers and businesses meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of today's economy. EKCEP is the administrative entity for the 23-county Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. Local Workforce Area and serves as staff to the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB), which oversees Eastern Kentucky's network of Kentucky Career Center JobSight workforce centers that provide access to a variety of state and federal programs that offer employment and training assistance for jobseekers and employers. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), EKCEP also administers programs that help adults looking for work, workers who have been dislocated from their jobs, and economically disadvantaged young people. WIOA assistance ranges from career counseling and job search assistance to tuition support and work-based training opportunities.

EKCEP is headquartered in Hazard, Kentucky, and serves a population of over 440,000 in 23 counties in the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky.

Primary funding for EKCEP, Inc. comes from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, through the Kentucky Cabinet for Education and Workforce Development, under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). EKCEP also provides services funded by grants from a variety of other sources, both public and private, to address specific regional workforce needs not addressed by its primary funding. Among its other grants, EKCEP recently has received grant funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to support the creation of a technology-driven workforce that will help transform and reinvent Eastern Kentucky's economy. This funding is targeted to provide employer-driven, skills-based, targeted, and focused trainings (in both classroom and work-based settings) that will prepare Eastern Kentucky workers to compete for and obtain jobs in Information Technology (IT) that will allow those workers to remain in the region.

II. SERVICES SOLICITED BY THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

EKCEP, Inc. is requesting proposals for organizations that will provide Information Technology (IT) training and IT job-placement services to Eastern Kentuckians. EKCEP is seeking to contract with organizations that will plan, coordinate, market, and deliver a variety of targeted and focused IT trainings and technical assistance to Eastern Kentuckians that will prepare them to apply for, secure, and succeed in employment in any of a broad spectrum of career pathways in the digital economy. EKCEP expects respondents to explain, in detail, the nature of their proposed training, along with any existing employer partnerships or identified employment opportunities that can lead to placements for trainees. (Specific expectations related to these training and placement services are detailed further under "Targeted Objectives" below.) As part of this rolling RFP process, EKCEP expects to make multiple awards to multiple entities under this RFP for a variety of training deliveries in various disciplines of IT leading to the placement of successful trainees in IT jobs – either with employers within Eastern Kentucky, or with employers outside the region who will allow employees to work from Eastern Kentucky under a "telework" arrangement.

Partnerships between training organizations and employers are critical to the success of this initiative. EKCEP will look most favorably upon proposals submitted jointly by a training entity and an employer (or a consortium of employers) within the Eastern Kentucky region with IT hiring needs. EKCEP will also look favorably upon proposals submitted jointly by a training entity and an employer (or a consortium of employers) who will hire successful trainees into remote, telework jobs that can be performed within Eastern Kentucky.

Additionally, EKCEP strongly values creativity, innovation, and efficiency in any proposed tech or tech-centered training opportunity that is connected to employers with a documented tech hiring need. Proposed trainings that do not feature specified, identified employment opportunities for participants who successfully complete the training will not be considered under this RFP.

A. FUNDING AVAILABLITY

Funding for services solicited under this RFP will be available on a rolling basis after Feb. 15, 2018. All projects proposed under this RFP must be able to be completed, in full, prior to June 6, 2019. Awards will be made on a rolling basis in this same time period, based upon on the responding entities' proposals and their ability to successfully plan, execute, and fully deliver activities and deliverables called for in this RFP. Once EKCEP has accepted proposals whose budgets equal the total funds available, further proposals will not be considered, regardless of when this occurs in the period covered by this RFP.

There will be additional activities in EKCEP's efforts that are outside the scope of this RFP and will use additional available funding to support other tech-incubating activities

(e.g. tech scholarships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), work-based learning placements, and client-based services) that also aid in the economic transformation. However, such activities can and should be featured in proposals solicited and received through this RFP where applicable. EKCEP greatly values on-the-job learning scenarios where an employer (through either skilled current employees in the workplace, an adjunct expert trainer, or an external training organization brought into the workplace) provides practical, hands-on experience for trainees and/or new hires that EKCEP's resources can support through training-wage subsidies.

Because this is a rolling solicitation of proposals, and EKCEP will continue to accept responses to this RFP until available funding targeted for this solicitation is exhausted, the period of grant activity expires on June 6, 2019, or EKCEP formally withdraws this solicitation.

B. TARGETED OBJECTIVES

This RFP is seeking individual proposals on tech training and job placement initiatives that will:

- **Increase tech employment in Eastern Kentucky prior to June 6, 2019. Although preference will be given to proposals that fill the most tech jobs at the most economical cost, EKCEP will also consider small training proposals that train and fill "niche" tech jobs that are currently nonexistent or underrepresented in Eastern Kentucky's economy.**
- **Feature job-placement partnerships with an employer (or a consortium of employers) that are either located within Eastern Kentucky or are located outside the region but will hire remote teleworkers in Eastern Kentucky. Any and all such partners must indicate within the proposal a documented need to hire new employees trained in specific tech/IT disciplines for specific, defined, and existing job opportunities**
- **Focus on targeted training — through either classroom-style deliveries, on-the-job trainings in an employer's workplace or multiple employers' workplaces, or a combination of those two deliveries — that is centered around high-demand tech skills, coding languages or other IT and digital-economy disciplines <u>that are clearly demonstrated to be in need by employers in the region or outside the region (for remote hires) – or a combination of both scenarios.</u>**
- **Feature strong emphasis on and evidence of a positive Return on Investment (ROI), and include ROI details showing a comparison of the cost per job created by the proposed training and job-placement activities (derived from the project's overall proposed budget) against the salary range for that job type**

With these four targeted objectives in mind, EKCEP expects entities responding to this RFP to describe in their proposal how they will work closely and collaboratively with our workforce agency's administrative leadership, tech program leads, and business liaisons

to create, shape, and define the vision, mission, and opportunity of the proposed project. This will include, but is not limited to, explanations of:

- **Planning and execution of training delivery (including training locations, training duration training schedules, training delivery specifics, etc.).**
- **Collaboration with EKCEP on:**
    - o **Planning and execution of job placements.**
    - o **Promotions and public outreach.**
    - o **Targeted assessments and screenings for potential trainees.**

C. PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

The performance goals for the original three-year grant period (June 6, 2016 – June 6, 2019) of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant that funds this RFP and other related tech efforts call for 200 workers/trainees to be served, and for 80 percent of those workers/trainees (160 people) to become employed. To date, the project's first phase has served 56 workers/trainees and produced 30 jobs—meaning 144 workers/trainees must be served and 130 of those workers/trainees must become employed during the second phase of the project. The activities of the contracting entity — described in its response to this RFP — will not be solely responsible for meeting the full balance of the project's performance goals. However, each RFP response should closely detail the proposing entity's ability to contribute toward EKCEP meeting these goals via a training or series of trainings — followed by job-placement activities — and how it intends to structure all related activities in the project to do so. Additional details of entity's share of performance-related goals in each key area of activity in this project will be determined, post-award, in collaboration with EKCEP.

III. **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

Funding for services solicited under this RFP will be available on a rolling basis after Feb. 15, 2018. All projects proposed under this RFP must be able to be completed, in full, prior to June 6, 2019.

Beginning in February 2018, proposals received under this RFP will be reviewed monthly, on the 15th of each month. To be considered in any month, proposals must be received by EKCEP by COB on the 10th of that month. (In months where the 10th falls on a Saturday or Sunday, proposals must be received by COB on the Friday preceding the 10th.) Decisions and awards will be announced to all proposing entities (successful or unsuccessful) by EKCEP by the 25th of each month. This schedule of reviews and awards will continue until all available funding targeted for this solicitation is exhausted, the period of grant activity expires on June 6, 2019, or EKCEP formally withdraws this solicitation.

To be considered, respondents must submit three hard copies and one electronic copy of their proposal.

Hard copies should be sent to:

> EKCEP, Inc.
> Attn: Michael Cornett
> 412 Roy Campbell Drive, Suite 100
> Hazard, Kentucky 41701

The electronic copy should be emailed to: RFP@EKCEP.org

EKCEP welcomes questions about this RFP and its contents throughout the rolling submission period. Questions may be emailed to Michael Cornett, EKCEP director of agency expansion and TechHire Eastern Kentucky project director, at MCORNETT@EKCEP.org.

IV. PROPOSAL CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

To be considered, proposals must consist of the following information in this prescribed order. (Number and letter each section of your submission appropriately.)

A. **Proposal Cover and Affirmations Form**
   The proposing entity or lead entity in a partnership submitting a proposal must complete the Proposal Cover and Affirmations Form (see Appendix 1). Use this form as the cover page for the proposal.

B. **Partner Affirmations Form**
   If the proposal is being submitted by a partnership, each partner of the lead entity must complete a Partner Affirmations Form (see Appendix 2). If there are no partners, this form may be omitted.

C. **Narrative**
   Provide descriptions of the proposed project activities for Sections 1, 2, and 3 below:

   1. *Training Plan and Delivery Description*
      Describe your organization's plan to design, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive, focused, employment-targeted, and tech-driven IT training program that meets the components described in section "II.B. Targeted Objectives" above. This training plan should include full information on the chosen delivery mechanisms for this training during each phase of the project.

      Explain, in detail, how implementing this plan will contribute to EKCEP meeting the performance goals as listed section "II.C. Performance Outcomes" above. Also, include a high level of detail on the specific jobs for which trainees are being trained to fill.

      Further, your organization must include a high level of detail on methods of identifying traits, skills, and aptitudes in potential trainees that ensure they have the best odds of success in the proposed delivery. This detail should include, but not be limited to:

      • Who are ideal training candidates for the activity your organization is proposing?
      • What prerequisites must candidates meet to enter training?
      • What base knowledge should candidates possess to increase their odds of success in training and job placement?
      • What experience—academically and/or on the job—should candidates have?
      • What are the best specific assessments or screenings that should be utilized to determine answers for the four preceding questions, and how do you propose

collaborating with EKCEP on interpreting the results of these assessments and screenings?

Limit this training plan description to no more than eight (8) pages.

2. **Evaluations**
   Describe your organization's plan and mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the training plan, its execution, its delivery, and its results, as measured against EKCEP's objectives and performance goals. Explain the types of evaluation tools, such as surveys, observation, material review, etc., that will be used to evaluate the program, and any advanced techniques that may be appropriate for evaluating results. The evaluations should include consideration of: the long-term and short-term benefits to applicants/participants; the level of skills learned; the appropriateness of the trainers, materials and methods; the success of training and job-placement activities; and the number of jobs created.

   Limit this evaluation plan description to no more than two (2) pages.

3. **Job Placements**
   Describe the plan for placing the trainees who successfully complete the proposed training in jobs. Include a description of the specific employer needs to be met by the proposed training and the details of the commitments by any partnering employers to hire successful trainees. (If the proposed training is post-hire, on-the-job training, be sure to include these employer commitments.) Include the expected wages for each of these jobs.

   Limit this job placements plan description to no more than two (2) pages.

D. **Project Component Budgets**

   Provide a budget of no more than three (3) pages total for the following:

   Planning and Execution of Training Delivery, and Job Placement and Assistance

   This section of the budget should detail your organization's expenses related to the planning and delivery of the proposed trainings. This would include the costs of:
   - Instructors/session leaders (whether internal staff, external trainers, or both) for the training.
   - Curricula creation and customization.
   - Delivery of training sessions.
   - Supplies and materials.
   - Training-related travel.

- Specific venues.
- Equipment.
- Other training-related costs.

Wherever possible, indicate the type and style of session delivery that would incur each cost.

Additionally, this budget should also detail your organization's expenses and costs—if any—associated with job placement assistance and activities for participants in the program throughout the length of the project.

E. Organizational Capacity

Responses must demonstrate the lead applicant's capacity to execute all four components in this project (see "II.B. Targeted Objectives" above). To be considered, applicants must have the capacity to:

- Collaborate on, develop, and execute effective promotions/public outreach activities;
- Deliver and analyze effective assessments and screening tools for applicants;
- Develop a training plan for this project and deliver that training;
- Effectively assist with coordination of job placement assistance and activities for graduates;
- Identify and secure post-training employment opportunities for successful trainees with in-area or out-of-area employers with a demonstrated hiring need for individuals with new tech-related skills.

To prove this capacity, proposals must include the following elements regarding the lead entity:

1. *Executive Summary*
   Provide a brief description of your organization's mission and history, including a brief summary of its experience and expertise in training, outreach, evaluations, employer partnerships, and job placement.

2. *Business Credentials*

   Provide the following documentation of your organization's business credentials:

   - A copy of your business' certificate of existence, articles of incorporation, or other documentation that demonstrates that it is a legitimate entity with the authority to conduct business in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

- Copies of any organizational certifications, designations, licensures, etc. relevant to IT skills to be taught under this RFP.
- Copies of any organizational certifications, designations, licensures, etc. relevant to the training, outreach, evaluation, and job placement functions solicited under this RFP.

3. Summary of Current Projects
Provide a description of current or recent projects successfully completed that support your organization's qualifications and ability to perform the services requested. (Limit this to no more than 3 pages.)

4. Principal Staff
Attach the resumes of each of the organization's executive management team.

5. Designated Project Staff
Provide the names, titles, current responsibilities, and qualifications of staff who would be assigned responsibility for this project if your organization receives the contract.

6. Board of Directors
Provide a current list of the officers and members of the board of directors of your organization. (Limit this to no more than 1 page).

V. TERMS OF THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. is the sole evaluator of proposals submitted under this rolling RFP and its evaluation of the suitability of any and all proposals is final and not subject to appeal.

The issuance of this RFP does not bind or require Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. to award the funds described herein or execute the project described herein. If Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. finds it in the best interests of its mission and the intended use of the funds that support this RFP, Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. may choose to reject all proposals submitted in response to this RFP and rebid the project.

If Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. finds it in the best interests of its mission and the intended use of the funds that support this RFP, Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. may choose to negotiate with the best bidder to modify the terms or some of the specifications of the submitted bid before declaring the final award of the contract for this project.

APPENDIX 1

Proposal Cover and Affirmations Form

Please copy, complete, and sign the cover and affirmations form
that appears on the following page.
Use the completed form as the first page of your proposal.

**Proposal to Provide Information Technology (IT) Training
and Job Placement Services to Eastern Kentuckians
in the Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. Local Workforce Area**
_____

(During the Period February 15, 2018—June 6, 2019)

Full Name of Lead Proposing Organization:		
Full Mailing Address (Street, City, State, ZIP):		
Type of Organization (non-profit, for-profit, LLC, etc.):	Year Established:	Phone Numbers (include area code):

Contact Persons	
Name:	Title:

AFFIRMATIONS: The person signing below affirms that he/she is authorized to submit this proposal on behalf of the proposing entity. The person signing below further affirms that the proposing entity is solvent and capable of performing the services as described in the attached proposal and agrees to EKCEP Workforce Innovation Board's terms of service as described in the Request for Proposals to which this response is submitted.

Signature:	Date:
Printed Name:	Title:

APPENDIX 2

Partner Affirmations Form

Each employer or other partner engaged in the proposal must
complete and sign a copy of the partner affirmations form
that appears on the following page.
Include the completed form with the proposal.

Partner Affirmation Form
for a Proposal to Provide Information Technology (IT) Training
and Job Placement Services to Eastern Kentuckians
in the Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. Local Workforce Area
_____
(During the Period February 15, 2018—June 6, 2019)

Name of Lead Proposing Organization:		
Full Name of **Partner** Organization:		
Full Mailing Address of Partner Organization (Street, City, State, ZIP):		
Type of Organization or Business (non-profit, for-profit, LLC, etc.):	Year Established:	Phone Numbers (include area code):
Contact Persons		
Name:	Title:	

AFFIRMATIONS: The person signing below affirms that he/she is authorized to submit this proposal on behalf of the partner entity or business. The person signing below further affirms that the partner entity has agreed to partnering with the proposing entity to perform the services as described in the attached proposal; and that the tech hiring needs identified in the proposal are real; and agrees to EKCEP Workforce Innovation Board's terms of service as described in the Request for Proposals to which this response is submitted.

Signature:		Date:
Printed Name:	Title:	