

EASTERN KENTUCKY



CONCENTRATED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, INC.

Request for Proposals

to

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

**Services to be Performed
January 1, 2018 through June 6, 2019**

**Issued by
The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board**

December 1, 2017

I. EASTERN KENTUCKY C.E.P., INC.

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 training (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. Funding available for services solicited under this RFP will fall within the range of \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 dependent upon on the selected entity's response and details of its ability to successfully plan, execute, and fully deliver the activities and deliverables of outlined in 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.

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

EKCEP, Inc. is requesting proposals for an organization that will provide Information Technology (IT) training and IT job-placement services to Eastern Kentuckians. EKCEP is

seeking to contract with an organization that will plan, coordinate, market, and deliver a variety of 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. These services are described in more detail under “Scope of Work” below.

While the services requested through this RFP will be an integral part of EKCEP’s digital economy/IT training and technical assistance to citizens, these services do not encompass EKCEP’s entire effort. EKCEP’s concept involves creating an overall model, intake process, and program that starts by funneling large numbers of people into a process where they are first exposed to the general concepts of coding and employment in the digital economy/IT at public events and short-term trainings. Participants will proceed toward and along various pathways depending on assessments of the nature and strength of the aptitudes and abilities they bring into the program. After initial activities, enrolled participants will move toward junctures within the program that will lead some to tech employment, additional employer-specific trainings in the digital economy, and/or On-the-Job Training or Work Experience deployments with regional or remote companies. The services requested through this RFP will be critical in developing and executing key elements of the program’s promotions/outreach activities, assessments, initial trainings, more detailed customized trainings for employers, and job placement activities.

EKCEP expects to contract with an entity for a period of approximately 18 months (beginning January 1, 2018 and lasting at least through June 6, 2019) to plan, prepare, and deliver IT activities and training for individuals who will complete these activities and trainings and then exit into IT employment via various partner efforts and/or business partnerships.

A. SCOPE OF WORK

The entity selected will perform the following four key components:

- **Promotions/Public Outreach**
- **Assessments/Screening**
- **Delivery of Trainings**
- **Job Placement Assistance and Activities**

Descriptions of these components appear below.

1. Promotions/Public Outreach Component

- Collaborate with EKCEP, Inc. to create Eastern Kentucky (regional) branding and messaging necessary to recruit individuals for various training opportunities
- Collaborate with EKCEP, Inc. on appropriate media placement strategies and media buying activities

- Two-Day “Introduction to Tech” Sessions — EKCEP desires to have a kickoff round of at least six (6) two-day “Introduction to Tech” sessions soon after awarding the contract for this project and completing initial planning efforts with the contracting entity. These six sessions should be fully delivered within 6 to 8 months of the project’s launch. These highly public events will help build a regional profile for the program, positive branding and image, and establish long-term momentum.

The initial sessions would occur in at least six tentative locations in Eastern Kentucky, which may include (in addition to other to-be-determined) sites:

- Hazard, KY
- Louisa, KY
- Pikeville, KY
- Cumberland, KY
- West Liberty, KY
- Manchester, KY

Additional sessions beyond the kickoff round may be scheduled intermittently throughout the course of this project, and could also involve activity at EKCEP’s eight Teleworks USA “Teleworks Hub” sites in the region, select locations within the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), and other sites.

EKCEP, Inc. intends for these two-day sessions to:

- Draw large numbers of interested attendees.
- Be an effective, useful way to introduce tech careers to interested jobseekers/trainees.
- Serve as a mechanism for EKCEP and the contracting entity to coordinate and deliver a variety of assessments and screening activities to determine candidates’ aptitude for various tech career and training pathways.
- Combine with the results of the assessments/screenings to help EKCEP and the contracting entity determine which training pathway, on-the-job training, or other career opportunity the candidates should proceed into.
- Run consecutively or in a scheduled series, depending on the capacity of the contracting entity selected.
- Potentially tie into pending activities done in partnership between EKCEP and MIT’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL). MIT CSAIL is planning weekend deployments in 2018 in both Western Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky centering around its “App Inventor” product and the concept of “computational thinking” to help people explore rapid app development, and possibly consider transition to a tech career.

2. Assessment/Screening

- Collaborate with EKCEP, Inc. on proven and effective assessments and screening activities that are tech-appropriate for individuals who want to enter training
- Perform these assessments and screening activities in conjunction with EKCEP staff and workforce contractor staff, who will perform additional screenings for WIOA eligibility
- Share all assessment/screening results with EKCEP staff and workforce contractor staff, and provide interpretative guidance on the results
- Conduct entrance interviews with individuals who respond to the promotions and public outreach.
- Collaborate with EKCEP staff on selecting initial and final program participants.

3. Delivery of Trainings

Provide a variety of industry-recognized IT trainings in Eastern Kentucky, including but not limited to:

a. Five-Day “Fundamentals” Sessions

EKCEP desires that the contracting entity will provide five-day “Fundamentals” sessions that take qualified applicants to a deeper level of understanding of tech career and coding-related practices, languages, and skills. These five-day sessions will be provided only to applicants who have demonstrated through assessments and performance in the Promotions/Public Outreach Components (see II.A.1. above) activities that they are capable of succeeding at this kind of training.

These five-day sessions:

- Could take place following the two-day Promotions/Public Outreach sessions or in lieu of the two-day sessions, depending upon the delivery strategy decided upon by EKCEP and the contracting entity. (If the five-day sessions are done in lieu of the two-day sessions, the assessment strategies and tactics described above for the two-day sessions will occur at the beginning of the five-day sessions.)
- Will be taught by instructors in a hands-on delivery (i.e., not remotely via videoconference).
- May be provided at the same tentative Eastern Kentucky locations listed for the two-day sessions (Louisa, Hazard, Pikeville, Cumberland, West Liberty, Manchester).

b. Four-to-Eight-Week “Customized Instruction”

EKCEP desires that the contracting entity will conduct four-to-eight-week customized instruction centered around the IT needs of regional partner employers and other employers that allow employees to work remotely.

These four-to-eight-week Customized Instruction courses:

- Should prepare attendees with the specific tech skills needed for defined employment opportunities, or on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities and Work Experience placements with partner employers.
- Will be more immersive in nature than the two-day and five-day sessions.
- Will be designed for new coders or coders with limited tech work experience, and will teach a combination of both hard skills (coding languages and related instruction, real projects, etc.) and soft skills (portfolio building, career preparation, instruction on contract work, etc.).
- Will employ curricula designed and delivered by the contracting entity to suit the specific needs of participating employers.
- May be delivered in the same locations as previously listed for the two-day and five-day sessions (Louisa, Hazard, Pikeville, Cumberland, Morehead, Manchester).

4. Job Placement Assistance and Activities

While activities in the two-day Promotions/Public Outreach sessions serve largely as an intake and assessment method — and therefore may not be directly attached to job outcomes — the successful placement of trainees in tech jobs after the program’s organized trainings is one of EKCEP’s primary objectives for this project. It is EKCEP’s intent that the continuum of services and training in this project will ultimately assist us in placing people across a broad spectrum of IT-related jobs in the digital economy. EKCEP’s preference is that these jobs will consist primarily of unsubsidized hires immediately following training. However, EKCEP will assist some employers with on-the-job training (OJT) and wage-subsidized Work Experience placements to aid in job creation, provided that hiring occurs at the beginning or end of such subsidized placements. (In OJT or Work Experience placements, EKCEP would subsidize a percentage of the employees’ wages for a specified period.) To align with these objectives, EKCEP expects the contracting entity to help provide graduates with a direct line of communication to tech employers who accept applicants who do not have vast tech work experience. This could involve remote employers, EKCEP’s regional private-sector tech employers, and employment connections the contracting entity may have.

B. PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

The ARC performance goals for the original three-year grant period (June 6, 2016 – June 6, 2019) 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, the RFP response should closely detail the contracting entity’s ability to contribute to EKCEP meeting these goals, and how it

intends to structure all related activities in the project to do so. The 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

EKCEP, Inc. must receive proposals no later than COB on January 5, 2018. Bidders 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 expects to make a decision regarding the proposals received by January 12, 2018. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified shortly thereafter.

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

Complete the Proposal Cover and Affirmations Form (see Appendix 1)

B. Narrative

Provide descriptions of the proposed project activities for Sections 1 and 2 below:

1. Training Plan and Delivery Description

Describe your organization's plan to design, implement, and evaluate a multi-month, comprehensive tech-driven IT training program that meets the components described in section "II.A. Scope of Work" 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.B Performance Outcomes" above.

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 placement activities; and the number of jobs created.

Limit this evaluation plan description to no more than four (4) pages.

C. Project Component Budgets

Provide a budget of no more than two (2) pages for each of the following components of the project:

1. *Promotions/Public Outreach Budget*

Provide an 18-month budget detailing your organization's expenses and costs associated with providing collaborative support, branding, and promotional and marketing guidance for this project.

Additionally, this budget should also detail your organization's expenses related to the delivery of the initial and subsequent Two-Day "Introduction to Tech" Sessions included in Public Outreach activities described in section "II.A. Scope of Work." This would include the costs of:

- Instructors/Session Leaders (whether internal staff, external trainers, or both) for the sessions.
- Curricula creation and customization.
- Delivery of sessions.
- Supplies and materials.
- Training-related travel.
- Specific venues.
- Equipment.
- Other session-related costs.

Wherever possible, indicate the type and style of session delivery (as described in section "II.A. Scope of Work) that would incur each cost.

2. *Assessments/Screening Budget*

Provide an 18-month budget detailing your organization's expenses and costs and associated with assessing and screening program applicants, and interpreting the results of these assessments and screenings, in collaboration with EKCEP.

3. *Delivery of Trainings, and Job Placement Assistance and Activities Budget*

Provide an 18-month budget detailing your organization's expenses and costs associated with live classroom-based trainings and related activities (as outlined in section "II.A. Scope of Work" above), which would include the costs of:

- Trainers (whether internal staff, external trainers, or both) for the trainings.
- Curricula creation and customization.
- Delivery of trainings.
- Supplies and materials.
- Training-related travel.
- Specific venues.
- Equipment.
- Other training-related costs.

Wherever possible, indicate the type and style of training delivery (as described in section "II.A. Scope of Work") that would incur each cost.

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

D. Organizational Capacity

Responses must demonstrate the applicant's capacity to execute all four components in this project (see "II.A. Scope of Work" 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.

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

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, 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 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 January 1, 2018—June 6, 2019)

Full Name of 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:	
<p>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.</p>		
Signature:		Date:
Printed Name:	Title:	