

## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN) Request for Proposals Q&A

Updated Jan. 25, 2019

Similar questions may be grouped together with one answer provided for the group.

Q. Do you require the Statement of Compliance Form for the EARN proposal? There are no forms (like the ones in the Youth RFP) and currently no signatures required.

A. The RFP cover sheet has been updated with a certifications/authorization section, including a signature line. Please be sure to use the updated version of the cover sheet when submitting your proposal.

Q. The RFP states that the base contract will be one year, from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, with three one-year options. Should bidders submit just the one-year base budget in the template provided?

A. Proposed budgets should include costs for the base contract year only (period from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020). Costs for subsequent option years will be determined each year, if and when option years are exercised by P4W.

Q. The RFP states that the Contractor must maintain the requirements of HIPPA. Will P4W require the Contractor to execute a Business Associate Agreement? If P4W requires an executed BAA, can a copy be provided? Please explain how P4W is acting as a Covered Entity or Hybrid Entity.

A. P4W is currently reviewing HIPPA requirements related to EARN, with the intent to include further guidance in the Agreements resulting from this RFP. All P4W subrecipients are required to maintain systems and practices that protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, including adherence to P4W's Personally Identifiable Information Policy, which can be found in the following location: <https://www.partner4work.org/document/personally-identifiable-information-policy/>

Q. Would P4W allow for the EARN programs to be operated out of the One Stop? What are the costs and what is included in those costs?

Q. In several of our projects, we offer both WIOA and TANF services in one location to support improved integration, communication and leveraging of resources. Is there space in either both or one of the PA CareerLink® locations to support a co-located EARN program? If so, please provide an FTE cost for cost-sharing and the amount of space available, broken down by PA CareerLink® location? Additionally, please indicate what infrastructure is included in the cost sharing, i.e. use of printers, fax machines, telephone, shared use of the resource room or meeting space, etc.

A. Current locations of PA CareerLink® centers in Allegheny County are listed below, which are subject to change. Currently, space does not exist in either one-stop center to accommodate a full EARN program operation; however, P4W is open to and welcomes ideas regarding future colocation of EARN programming in one-stop centers and applicants' ability to deliver a co-located program model. The current lease for PA CareerLink® Downtown Pittsburgh expires in April 2021. The current lease for PA CareerLink® Allegheny East expires in March 2020.

Although co-location of a full EARN program operation at the one-stop centers is not possible at this time, some level of EARN program representation may be accommodated at the one-stop centers. Should applicants choose to include EARN program representation in either of the PA CareerLink® centers in Allegheny County, the corresponding contribution to the Resource Sharing Agreement (RSA) should be included in the proposed budget. The approximate cost for an FTE in either center is currently between \$15,000-\$20,000 annually and is renegotiated each year. By contributing to the RSA, staff are provided with basic office furnishings and access to equipment, which includes standard furniture, such as a cubicle or office room, desk, chair, and file storage; telephone service and related equipment (e.g., desk phone); internet service, including Wi-Fi; and access to multifunction printer/copier/scanners. The RSA contribution also covers costs related to information technology, equipment, supplies and furniture shared by PA CareerLink® partners (e.g., conference rooms, signage, brochures) or made available to the public (e.g., Career Resource Center, classrooms).

- PA CareerLink® Downtown Pittsburgh  
304 Wood Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
- PA CareerLink® Allegheny East  
2040 Ardmore Blvd  
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Q. Is it allowable for a new proposer to utilize the current EARN centers with the intent of taking control of the lease post contract award?

Q. Since the facilities are the responsibility of the contractor, is there opportunity for a new operator to negotiate a lease within current locations of operations?

Q. Is equipment available for future use (computers, printers, copiers, etc.)? Is there a cost associated with using these items? Is there an expectation that additional equipment will be needed or for existing equipment to be replaced? Is furniture available for future use (desks, etc.)? Is there an expectation that additional furnishings will be needed or for existing furniture to be replaced? If the service provider purchases any equipment (furniture, computers, etc.), who is expected to take ownership at the end of the program?

Q. New bidders will incur startup costs for facilities and equipment that likely will not be required for incumbent vendors with existing offices. Will P4W pay start up and/or transition costs as a separate cost to ensure an “apples to apples” comparison of budgets? Should bidders provide this with their proposal or will it be negotiated after contract award?

A. P4W does not maintain site control or ownership of any of the EARN centers; rather, each center is selected and directly managed by the contracted agency providing EARN services, although all arrangements are subject to approval by P4W. The location, space arrangements, supplies, equipment and materials necessary to operate the EARN center are the responsibility of the contracted agency. Selected applicants will be responsible for site administration, operations and service delivery within the EARN center.

Applicants should include in proposed budgets all necessary supply, equipment and materials costs for conducting the proposed EARN program. For non-incumbent providers who would incur higher one-time start-up costs upon award, such costs should be well-described in the budget narrative so P4W can classify them as such, allowing proposal reviewers to differentiate them from the ongoing, longer-term costs of the proposed EARN program. P4W recognizes that one-time start-up costs may include computers, furniture, and other standard office supplies and equipment. If a transition of providers occurs as a result of this RFP, one-time start-up costs will be determined and negotiated during or after contract award. All costs must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary. Ownership of materials and supplies, including computing devices, will be determined by the Uniform Guidance.

Q. The budget narrative instructions in the RFP ask for an indirect cost plan with current approval by a cognizant agency. Is this a requirement for contracting? Or would Partner4Work (P4W) be willing to negotiate a rate, as is permitted in the Uniform Guidance §200.331.a.4, where an entity that does not have a federally approved indirect rate and the de minimis rate is not viable, a contracting agency is allowed to negotiate an indirect rate.

A. Applicants without a federally approved indirect cost rate, and for whom the de minimis rate is not viable, may propose an indirect cost rate in their proposal. The proposed rate will be subject to review, negotiation, and approval by Partner4Work. Calculation for the proposed rate must be clearly explained in the budget narrative of the proposal (see Proposal Process & Requirements, How to Apply, 6. Budget Narrative).

Q. Is profit allowable? How can we incorporate profit and management fees into the proposed budget?

A. While profit is allowed for for-profit entities, the extent to which an applicant can meet performance objectives while minimizing indirect and profit costs will be a factor in the evaluation process. Profit can be included in

the Other section of the budget template and disclosed in the budget narrative.

Q. Are administrative costs allowable?

A. Administrative costs are allowed, subject to federal, state and local regulations, including but not limited to the Uniform Guidance and WIOA and/or TANF regulations. All costs must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary.

Q. Historically, what is the average amount per participant budgeted for incentives for the EARN Program?

A. Currently, contracted EARN providers utilize the below criteria for granting incentives to EARN clients. Incentives are typically issued in the form of gift cards. The criteria and related amounts for incentive payments are currently under review by P4W and subject to change. The below table is provided for informational purposes only. Applicants should include a proposed model for issuing incentives to EARN clients, including client performance standards that will be incentivized and the form and value of each incentive.

ACHIEVED PLACEMENT	\$150	STARTED 4 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS OF WORK (TOTALING AT LEAST 80 HRS) BEFORE 180 DAYS
RETENTION PAYSTUBS (FOR 2 WEEKS OF WORK) WITH 20-29 HOURS PER WEEK	\$50	IF SUBMITTED <u>ON TIME</u>
RETENTION PAYSTUBS (FOR 2 WEEKS OF WORK) WITH 30+ HOURS PER WEEK	\$75	IF SUBMITTED <u>ON TIME</u>
ACHIEVEMENT	\$50	OBTAIN DRIVER'S LICENSE, GED/HS DIPLOMA, OR VOC/ED DEGREE/CERTIFICATE
CONNECTCARD/GAS CARD	MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR MONTHLY CONNECTCARD OR GAS CARD WHILE WORKING. MUST MAINTAIN QUALIFYING HOURS OF EMPLOYMENT.	

Q. Should bidders include estimated costs for client incentives in their submitted budgets?

Q. Are participant costs such as work experience, supportive services and incentives part of the budget to be submitted with this RFP response?

A. Yes. Your proposed budget should include all participant costs related to your program model, assuming they are allowable (e.g., OJT, PWE, SE, incentives, training-related). Please keep in mind that all costs must be incurred before reimbursement occurs through the normal invoicing process. P4W will not consider advance payments or direct payments to third parties.

Q. The RFP describes Performance Payments made to selected applicants and the need to reinvest these payments in the EARN program. Does this preclude the payment of bonuses to EARN staff for their efforts in achieving program goals from the Performance Payment?

Q. Could you provide some examples of appropriate ways for reinvesting performance funds in the EARN program?

A. Plans for use of performance funds should clearly demonstrate how EARN clients will benefit and how the proposed program model will be enhanced. Plans and activities related to spending performance payments are subject to approval by P4W and selected applicants will be required to maintain and make available documentation demonstrating how performance payments were spent.

Q. What is the average monthly referral volume to contractors for the EARN Program? Of those referrals, what percentage on average become enrolled in the program?

A. The Allegheny County EARN program receives approximately 100 to 150 referrals from the CAO per month for all three EARN centers. Of those referrals, approximately 80 to 100 are enrolled as EARN clients. Any agreements resulting from this RFP will require a 65% referral to enrollment rate.

Q. Per the RFP, selected applicants will be required to fully serve participants already enrolled in the EARN Program as of July 1, 2019. Please provide the current average monthly active caseload served in each EARN center?

A. In total, the Allegheny County EARN program serves approximately 250 to 350 clients per month, which is normally distributed as follows: 45% downtown and the rest split between McKeesport and Wilkinsburg.

Q. How will the CAO refer case files and information for referred participants to the Contractor? Is this done electronically via the Commonwealth Workforce Development System?

A. All referrals for the EARN program will be made through CWDS – the Commonwealth Workforce Development System.

Q. Who are the current EARN providers, and what locations do they serve?

A. Current contracts for provision of EARN services in the three Allegheny County EARN centers are as follows:

- Downtown Pittsburgh: EDSI (Educational Data Services, Inc.)
- McKeesport: Goodwill of Southwestern PA
- Wilkinsburg: The SRS Group

Assignment of clients to EARN centers is mainly determined by the client in conjunction with their CAO caseworker. All centers must take referrals for clients residing throughout Allegheny County.

Q. Page 25 Transition plan (if applicable): Will there be a separate transition budget?

A. Should the outcome of this procurement result in a change of service providers and EARN centers in Allegheny County, P4W reserves the right to negotiate a transition period during which incoming and outgoing providers work concurrently to ensure a smooth transition and minimize disruptions to job seekers and employers. Such a transition period could accelerate the start date of any agreements resulting from this RFP by an estimated period of one month, requiring the selected applicant(s) to begin on June 1, 2019. The need for a transition period will be determined by P4W during proposal evaluation with related costs negotiated during or after the contract award process. Costs related to a possible one-month transition period should not be included in the proposed budget.

Q. Is there a requirement to hire existing staff and what are the current staffing levels?

A. There is no requirement to hire existing staff; however, as noted in the RFP, “the selected applicant(s) will give first consideration in employment to current employees providing services in the EARN centers who may be displaced because of this procurement.” P4W will provide a staff survey for the current EARN centers, including position titles (see further below). Applicants should consider current staff structures for informational purposes only. Applicants should develop staff plans that reflect proposed program models.

Q. The RFP states that the “Proposal must be submitted in 12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins.” Can the font and spacing requirements for graphics and tables be smaller as long as the information remains legible?

A. Yes. However, please keep in mind that tables, charts, graphs and other illustrations will be counted toward the page limitations established by the RFP.

Q. The narrative section of the response has a limit of 15 pages double-spaced. Is it possible to change that to single-spaced to provide for a more comprehensive response?

A. Proposals must conform to the standards and requirements of the RFP to allow for a fair and effective review by proposal evaluators.

Q. Are attachments, in addition to those requested in the RFP, allowed in the proposal? If yes, will the contents be viewed as part of the evaluation?

A. No. Additional attachments not specifically described in the RFP are not allowed and will not be considered.

Q. Please confirm headers and footers are allowed within the 1-inch margins.



A. Yes. Headers and footers are allowed within the 1-inch page margins.

Q. Do the questions/prompts have to be included? Alternatively, can the questions/prompts be truncated, singled spaced and a smaller font size as to not consume the narrative page count?

A. The questions, prompts or headers of the How to Apply section of the RFP do not have to be included in proposals; however, effective proposals will contain all required proposal content and follow the same general order illustrated in the How to Apply section of the RFP.

Q. Does CWDS have the ability to accept uploaded electronic documents to support verification of hours engaged in work activities?

A. Currently, CWDS is not being used to upload and store documentation verifying client participation in EARN activities. However, the selected applicant(s) will be required to participate in monthly validations of client program participation and performance outcomes, conducted through document review. Files required for validation must be submitted through secure, electronic transmission.

Q. Is the new contractor expected to store the existing paper program/case files and records of the incumbent vendor? If yes, please provide the volume of paper files to be transferred from the incumbent vendor.

A. Should a new contractor be selected, the incumbent subrecipient must retain and, upon request, make available to P4W all financial and program records in accordance with the record retention requirements stated in the incumbent's contract. Paper records pertaining to clients receiving services at the time of transition to a new contractor will be transferred to the new contractor. The volume of these documents will be determined at the time of the transition.

Q. Is the new contractor expected to transfer/convert any electronic records from the incumbent vendor? If yes, please provide the number of records, total storage size, and data fields.

A. Should a new contractor be selected, the incumbent subrecipient must retain and, upon request, make available to P4W all financial and program records in accordance with the record retention requirements stated in the incumbent's contract. Electronic records pertaining to clients receiving services at the time of transition to a new contractor will be transferred to the new contractor. The volume and conversion of these documents will be determined at the time of the transition.

Q. Will technical assistance be provided to the selected applicant(s)?

A. Yes. P4W program, fiscal and compliance staff will be available to provide limited technical assistance; however, to be considered for award, applicants must demonstrate the experience, organizational knowledge and capacity required by the RFP.

Q. What is the turnaround time for payment of invoices?

A. Invoices submitted by the 10th of the month will be reimbursed within 30 days. If the 10th of the month is missed, payment could be delayed to 45 days due to the timing of funding draws.

Q. Can P4W post the list of those who attended the bidder's conference?

A. P4W does not post publicly the names and contact information of individuals and organizations who attend bidder's conferences.

Q. Does P4W provide the selected vendor with access to a document management & document imaging system? If so will the vendor staff also be provided with scanning equipment and licenses to utilize this system? If the vendor must purchase their own equipment or licenses for P4W's system please detail the specifications of each item.

A. P4W does not select, pay for or maintain a document management and document imaging system for EARN service providers. Applicants should determine the need for administrative and technological tools and systems,

according to the requirements of the RFP and the proposed program model, and include necessary costs in the proposed budget.

Q. What is meant by exiting the program?

A. Exiting occurs when an enrolled EARN participant is unenrolled from the program. In the EARN program, exiting is also called “termination.” Terminations can be positive or negative. Please reference the EARN Manual located in the following location for full definitions of EARN terminations: <https://www.partner4work.org/uploads/earn-manual-py-2018-19.pdf>

Q. Could you provide clarification on whether there is a preference with the submission of resumes verses a summary of duties with minimum qualifications? Do either count toward the narrative page limitation?

A. If specific individuals are expected to assume key staff positions, please provide their resumes. If specific individuals have not yet been selected, please provide minimum qualifications for key staff positions. Resumes or minimum qualifications are required attachments and therefore do not count toward the narrative page limitation.

## EARN Staffing Survey

The following survey represents positions and staffing levels at the three EARN centers in Allegheny County. Position titles and related roles and responsibilities vary by location, depending on the contracted provider operating the EARN center. This staffing survey is provided for informational purposes only. Applicants should develop staff plans that reflect proposed program models.

Location	Position	Number Employed
Downtown	Program Supervisor	1
	Business Engagement Specialist	1
	Community Service Manager	1
	Employment Consultant	4
	Classroom Instructor	1
	Instructor	1
	Job Coordinator	1
	Job Developer	2
	Clerical Support	1
	Division Specialist	1
	McKeesport	Site Administrator
Receptionist		1
Work Activity Specialist		1
Career Case Management Specialist		1
Instructor		1
Service Coordinator		2
Administrative Assistant		1
Employment Specialist		2
Retention Specialist	2	
Wilkinsburg	Site Administrator	1
	Training Staff <sup>1</sup>	7
	On Site Work Activity Supervisor	1
	Off Site Work Activity Coordinator	1
	Clerical	1.5

<sup>1</sup> "Training staff" in Wilkinsburg perform a combination of service coordination, work readiness and job development functions.