Tech Hire Boot Camp RFP and IT Career Coach RFQ Questions and Responses

Question 1
Section I. of the RFP refers to "the core skills needed for IT jobs with Maine employers." Has a comprehensive list of these skills been compiled, or are we to use our own experiences?

Answer
Unlike other IT hubs nationally, Maine is comprised mostly of businesses which are not specifically IT companies, but which utilize IT within their organization. Given the broad range of skills needed across multiple employers, the IT BOOT camp should be a foundational training program. Attached please see current labor market data for Maine employers.

Question 2
Section I. also indicates that "75% of participants will be youth and young adults with barriers." Please indicate the nature of the barriers that we can anticipate.

Answer
The Tech Hire Grant is funded by USDOL and operates under the definitions established by WIOA. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines “barriers to employment” as follows:

“The term "individual with a barrier to employment" means a member of 1 or more of the following populations:
(A) Displaced homemakers.
(B) Low-income individuals.
(C) Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, as such terms are defined in section 166.
(D) Individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities.
(E) Older individuals.
(F) Ex-offenders
(G) Homeless individuals (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e 2(6))), or homeless children and youths (as defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2))).
(H) Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system.
(I) Individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers.
(J) Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, as defined in section 167(i).
(K) Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
(L) Single parents (including single pregnant women).
(M) Long-term unemployed individuals.
(N) Such other groups as the Governor involved determines to have barriers to employment.
  (25) Individual with a disability.--
      (A) In general.--The term "individual with a disability" means an individual with a disability as defined in section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102).
      (B) Individuals with disabilities.--The term "individuals with disabilities" means more than 1 individual with a disability.”
For the purpose of the RFP, the target population may be comprised of any of the above, but a particular focus is on low-income youth (up to age 29).

**Question 3**
Under Population and Service Area the RFP refers to the "Greater Portland Area." What are the geographic constraints of Greater Portland. Specifically, would Saco and Brunswick be considered the Greater Portland area?

**Answer**
Yes. We are taking a broad and expansive approach to defining Greater Portland.

**Question 4**
Can we assume that participants in the program can be expected to be full-time on the boot camp? Would a 40-45 hour per week of contact hours be expected of all participants?

**Answer**
Yes. The Boot Camp model should be robust and comprehensive enough to provide students with the opportunity to acquire key skills that are valued by Maine employers. Given the population of Maine, the expectation is the majority of students will NOT have formal IT training prior to enrolling in the Boot Camp.

The expectation is that participants who enroll in the Boot Camp will commit to full time training, and be available for placement as interns upon completion of the Boot Camp.

**Question 5**
The RFP indicates "Should the successful bidder meet or exceed the metrics and CCWI is satisfied..." Have the success metrics for the program been determined?

**Answer**
Not yet – they are under development. We are attaching the metrics associated with grant that were provided to the federal government (USDOL). Metrics for the selected contractor will be developed from these measures.

**Question 6**
In Scope of Work, Item 1) Outreach the RFP identifies responsibilities for marketing and advertising. Could you please expand the description of what is expected for this item? Who has the responsibility to ensure that 80 students per year are participating in the boot camp?

**Answer**
Our WIOA service provider will peruse their database and client lists for appropriate candidates. We (CCWI and grant partners) will also engage system partners to assist with recruitment. However, developing outreach material and creating/deploying an outreach strategy will be a part of the successful contractor’s role.
Question 7
In Scope of Work, Item 2) Screening of Candidates the training provider is identified as responsible for the development of the screening mechanism for trainees. This responsibility also appears to be included in the RFQ for IT Career Coach. Could you distinguish how the responsibility is shared?

Answer
The Tech Hire grant will deploy multiple training methods. The IT Career Coach should identify and implement a screening mechanism which identifies a candidate’s appropriateness for the IT field in general. The IT Career Coach will also work with the candidate to determine what training best matches their interest and skill set as well as determine if any adult education services may be needed for remedial skill building.

The Boot Camp should identify and utilize a screening tool which identifies a candidate’s appropriateness for the particular training method that the boot camp will deploy.

Question 8
Could you expand on the relationship between the RFP for the Boot Camp and the RFQ for IT Career Coach? Do we need to bid on both or are they separate solicitations?

Answer
The IT Career Coach intentionally a separate solicitation. The Tech Hire grant will utilize multiple education and training options BEYOND the IT Boot Camp. These may include: self-paced, on-line training, traditional classroom training via higher education and/or vendors who are on the Maine Eligible Training Provider List for funding under WIOA. The IT Career Coach must be vendor neutral, familiar with different training options and be able to appropriately refer jobseekers to training or educational programs which best meets the jobseekers’ employment goals.

Question 9
In Scope of Work, Item 3) the CompTIA A+ Exam does not closely match the key tech skills identified in Item 3) -- would other certifications be desirable? Is the provision of A+ certification a hard requirement?

Answer
Based upon employer feedback and review of labor market data, the Comp TIA A+ credential was viewed as an asset for a non-traditional candidate without a degree in computer science. Tech Hire employer partners have agreed to competency based hiring, provided the candidate can demonstrate skill. The CompTIA A+ credential is a foundational credential for entry level positions which can then lead to other career paths.

Question 10
Section III. identifies January 8, 2017, as the start of deployment. Is it expected that there will be sufficient participants to begin the boot camp at that time? Would a May start time for the first
boot camp be sufficient? What constitutes the beginning of the deployment of the training program?

Answer
Per the solicitation the goal is to “train at least 80 individuals during 2017…” Given our contract with USDOL, year one commences July of 2016 which means that a total of 80 is envisioned (approximately) by end of July 2017. Therefore, a May start time for the first boot camp seems very late – although we do not envision a full blown deployment by January. However, we would like contractual obligations to commence on or before January 1, 2017. We encourage interested parties to devise a suggested deployment strategy that provides for a total of 80 individuals to be enrolled by July 2017.

Question 11
Is the contract to be based on a per participant basis or on a time period basis?

Answer
The contract will be for one year and also based on 80 participants.

Question 12
Section II. 3. states that students "should be prepared to sit for the CompTIA A+ exam." To the best of our knowledge, A+ is targeted to technicians supporting common hardware and software IT technologies. For the other IT career groups — development and programming, interaction and interface, analysis and data, and management and strategy — we haven’t seen A+ as a requirement for employment. Indeed, support positions themselves often don’t require A+. Can credentials representing national employer-defined DOL competencies be substituted for A+?

Answer
CompTIA A+ is the basic credential for IT professionals. Although the skill set for this credential is on the hardware side, this is a foundational credential to complete prior to moving into the more advanced coursework with databases and programming languages on the software side. Additional certifications would be desirable to employers if appropriate to include in the curriculum.

Please see attached for current labor market data which compiles jobs posted by Maine employers requesting CompTIA A+ certification.

Question 13
In section IV. 2. A., the key metrics are defined per cohort. However earlier the document, cohorts of multiple sizes were proposed: 40 in Portland, 20 each in Lewiston–Auburn and Bangor. Should our responses be provided for a defined-size cohort (20 or 40), or simply per student?

Answer
Continued funding is contingent upon Tech Hire participants successfully entering employment in IT related jobs. Targets were set per year to meet these goals. The cohort size is up to the training provider. Ideally, the boot camp will be offered multiple times throughout the year.

**Question 14**

How likely is it that an "online only" organization will win the award or at least a portion of the award?

**Answer**

At this time, we cannot definitively answer your question – whether there is “no chance” that an "online only" organization will win the award (or portion thereof).

We drafted the RFP believing that not everyone is geared toward online learning. As a result, we requested a blended model/approach.

Not knowing if there will be any response(s) that are a blended model/approach and otherwise qualified, it is not in our best interest to respond to your question.

**Question 15**

On page 4, Section IV. Questions, Part 1) a. we are directed to provide performance metrics as attachments. Is this any list of metrics by which we measure our institutions student success, or are there specific measures that you would like to see (besides the two examples listed)? Are you looking for data over time, or current completion and hire rates?

**Answer**


**Question 16**

On page 6, Section V.B. Responses: directs us to provide complete responses and information to Section IV and attachment A. I cannot find Attachment A. I've checked the RFP and find no mention other than this of Attachment A, and I've checked your website [http://www.coastalcounties.org/ccwi-seeks-rfq-rfp-techhire-project-implementation/](http://www.coastalcounties.org/ccwi-seeks-rfq-rfp-techhire-project-implementation/) but cannot find mention of Attachment A. Does this refer to the attachment in Section IV, Part 1a discussed in question 1 above? Or perhaps related to Appendix C; Suggested Outcome Measures Table that we received along with answers to some of our previous questions? Please advise, or forward a copy of Attachment A if different than attachment in question 1 above or Appendix C.

**Answer**

For your second question, we apologize, this was a typographical error. Reference made to Attachment A should NOT have appeared. Please disregard.