

**WESTERN ARKANSAS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

For

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
ONE-STOP OPERATOR**

Program Cycle July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Release Date: April 2023

Introduction to the Local Area

The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board (the Board) is a six-county local area made up of Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Polk, Scott, and Sebastian County leaders from business, education, labor, and government, with the majority of its board members representing the private business sector.

The mission of the Workforce Development Board is to set the vision, policy direction and performance expectations for the Western Arkansas workforce system.

Western Arkansas Planning and Development District (WAPDD) is the Fiscal Agent and serves as staff for the Board as defined under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The Workforce Development Board of Western Arkansas is committed to:

- Helping Western Arkansas win the skills race, today and in the future.
- Assisting area employers to attract and retain skilled and productive workers.
- Working with area education and training leaders to provide curriculum and programs that meet employer needs for workers with high-level skills.

Data related to the six-county area is listed in the current Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area Regional and Local Plan at <https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/>.

Technical Details

This Request for Proposal was prepared based upon the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) and associated U.S. Department of Labor Regulations and guidance. This Federal Law was implemented to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States. WIOA provides the framework for a national workforce preparation system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused, and locally managed. Mandatory core program partners include Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation, along with required partners specified in the Act. Bidders are strongly encouraged to read Training and Employment Guidance Letter 04-15 issued by the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines the vision for the One-Stop system under WIOA.

The three hallmarks of WIOA include:

1. The needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions, and local boards are accountable for this within the communities they serve.

2. One-Stop Centers provide excellent customer–centric services and focus on continuous improvement; and,
3. The workforce system supports strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

WIOA is built around the following key principles:

- Increase access and opportunity, particularly for those individuals with barriers to employment, to ensure success in the labor market.
- Support the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system.
- Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts to provide workers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages, and to provide employers with the skilled workers they need to succeed in a global economy.
- Promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services to address the employment and skill needs of workers, jobseekers, and employers.
- Increase the prosperity of workers and employers and the economic growth of communities, regions, and states, and the global competitiveness of the United States.
- Provide workforce investment activities, through statewide and local workforce development systems, which increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials by participants.

The Western Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board (Board) oversees the (WIOA) funds for the six-county area. WAPDD currently serves as the local area service provider and the current One-Stop Operator (OSO) is a Consortium of WIOA Core Partners, lead Partner Arkansas Department of Workforce Services.

In Section 107 of the legislation and in § 678.605 of WIOA Regulations Local Workforce Boards are required to competitively procure the OSO role and responsibilities. The Western Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board has tasked a Committee and Board staff to solicit and select an OSO.

The Board is soliciting submittals to identify an OSO for the Western Arkansas Comprehensive and Affiliate One-Stop Centers located at:

- Arkansas Workforce Center at Fort Smith (comprehensive)
616 Garrison Avenue, Room 101
Fort Smith, Arkansas 72901
- Arkansas Workforce Center at Mena (affiliate)
1000 College Ave.
Mena, Arkansas 71953

Purpose of Request for Proposal

The purpose of this solicitation is to select an OSO under WIOA for the Western Arkansas Local Workforce Development Area. The Board is looking for how a vendor responds to the requirements and experience.

Background and General Information

- A. The Board intends to be as inclusive as possible in this solicitation. Proposals will be accepted from any private for-profit agency, state or local unit of government, private non-profit organizations, or educational agency that can demonstrate the administrative and operational capability to successfully provide the services identified in this RFP. Consortium proposals will be accepted with responsibilities clearly defined and an agency designated as the lead agency. Bidders are encouraged to collaborate and coordinate with other agencies and should demonstrate this in the program narrative. The goal is to receive a wide variety of high quality, innovative submittals that meet the workforce development needs of the communities served in Western Arkansas.
- B. The resulting OSO contract with the successful bidder initially will be for the period, July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. Based on performance, the Board may extend the contract annually, from July 1 to June 30, for up to a total of four years as allowed in the WIOA. Contract extensions may be based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other factors determined appropriate by the Board and Chief Elected Officials. Notice for contract renewal will be made at the start of the fourth quarter each program year. Competitive procurement is required at least every four years according to the WIOA.
- C. Once the contract is awarded, the Board, in collaboration with the Chief Elected Officials, reserves the right to modify delivery design. In the event the modification requires additional labor hours on the part of the successful bidder, terms will be negotiated, and the contract modified. The Board also reserves the right to de-obligate funds from the successful bidder if it fails to meet contractual requirements.
- D. The Board reserves the right to make an award based on the criteria in this Request for Proposal or to make no awards, if that is deemed to serve the best interests of the Board and Western Arkansas. The submittal process is competitive and follows government procurement rules.
- E. WIOA provides the framework for a national workforce preparation system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused, and locally managed. The Board envisions a system that meets the needs of residents and businesses alike.
- F. This Request for Proposal is not in itself an offer of work, nor does it commit the Board to fund any submittals. The Board is not liable for any costs incurred in the preparation or research involved in the development of the response to this Request for Proposal.

- G. Bidders may be asked to answer questions electronically during the review process of this Request for Proposal.
- H. All commitments made by the Board because of this Request for Proposal are contingent upon the availability of funds.
- I. The Board assures it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the following laws: Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 law and the related regulations; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended.
- J. By providing a submittal to this Request for Proposal all bidders are providing an assurance that they will comply with the above nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions.
- K. Bidders should note that under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, the contents of submittals to the Board are subject to public release upon request, except those items specifically exempt from disclosure. The bidder shall mark as “proprietary” those parts of its submittal that it deems proprietary. However, the bidder is alerted that this marking is advisory only and not binding on the Board. If there is a request under the Freedom of Information Act to inspect any part of the submittal so marked, the Board will advise the bidder and request further justification in support of the “proprietary” marking. If the Board determines, after receipt of the justification, that the material is releasable, the bidder will be notified immediately. Under no circumstances will a submittal or any part of a submittal be released prior to the contract award decision.
- L. The Board will authorize the Administrative Entity to negotiate a contract for the provision of programs arising from this Request for Proposal.
- M. The successful bidder is required to maintain a local management office within the Comprehensive Workforce Center and provide detail on how each location will be staffed and managed.
- N. The successful bidder may not subcontract any part of the services unless approved in the Request for Proposal and/or approved in advance by the Administrative Entity.
- O. The successful bidder must assure that it will comply with Local, State, and Federal program and fiscal monitoring requests.
- P. Bidders are prohibited from discussing this Request for Proposal with Board Members, any retained contractor facilitating portions of the procurement process, Board Support Administrative Staff, or Local Chief Elected Officials. Such contact will result in disqualification of the response. A question period is provided within the Request for Proposal timeline.

- Q. Bidders who have provided a submittal may protest the award of the contract according to the following process:
1. Protests must be filed electronically and be received by the Board's representative at dwilliamson@wapdd.org by 4:00pm central time on June 23, 2023. All protests are public information after the protest period ends.
 2. All protests must state the basis for the protest in clear terms and provide an alternative the protester finds acceptable. The basis of the protest must be a violation of a State or Federal contracting law, rule, or regulation applicable to the contracting process.
 3. The Board representative will forward all protests to the One-Stop committee and provide details on whether the protests meet the above conditions.
 4. During any part of the review or consideration, the protester may be asked to clarify or amplify statements or to provide proof of claims or other statements. Any such requests must be fully responded to within the time designated by the One-Stop committee. In the event a protester fails to respond, the protest will be dismissed, and no further protest accepted relative to this Request for Proposal.
 5. The One-Stop committee will review the protest and will issue a written response that is intended as a complete and final answer to the protest. A response will be issued no later than June 27, 2023.
 6. The One-Stop committee will document the submission of a protest and the findings in meeting minutes and report its finding to the full Board.

Resource Information

Attachments to the Regional and Local Plan providing partner information and service locations can be found at <https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/>

The United States Department of Labor has a WIOA Online Community of Practice that provides information sharing needed to implement and maintain WIOA at: <http://on.workforcegps.org>

WIOA law and regulations can be found at: www.doleta.gov/wioa/

Arkansas's WIOA Combined State Plan can be found at:

<https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WAWDA-Plan-with-updates-9.21.pdf>

The current local Memorandum of Understanding can be found at

<https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Western-Arkansas-MOU-10.21.22.pdf>

RFP Timeline (*any changes to this schedule will be communicated by posting on the website.*)

- 5/2/23 Request for Proposal released and posted on <https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/>
- 5/16/23 Deadline for questions to Dennis Williamson at dwilliamson@wapdd.org by 5:00 pm central time.
- 5/23/23 Questions and Answers released and posted on <https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/> .
- 6/6/23 Proposals due electronically to Dennis Williamson at dwilliamson@wapdd.org by 5:00 pm central time.
- 6/13/23 Committee evaluation and recommendation to the full board or executive committee and chief elected officials.
- 6/21/23 Full Board or Executive Committee approval and Chief Elected Official approval.
- 6/21/23 Award Announcement
- 7/1/23 Contract Start Date

Eligible Applicants

Organizations eligible to respond to this Request for Proposal may fall within any of the following categories:

- Governmental Agencies
- Private Non-Profit Organizations
- Private For-Profit Businesses
- Educational Entities (other than elementary and secondary schools)

One-Stop Operator Roles and Responsibilities

The OSO must coordinate the service delivery of core and required one-stop partners and other partners working with the comprehensive and Satellite Workforce Centers. This includes managing partner responsibilities in the comprehensive One-Stop Centers as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The local WIOA MOU serves the key purpose of defining partner roles and focuses, in part, on the shaping of the workforce system. This includes the sharing of resources, referral agreements, and other resources or information necessary to conduct the mission of the local workforce delivery system. In the end, the overall goal is to ensure efficiency within the Western Arkansas workforce system.

WIOA was signed into law on July 22, 2014, and went into effect July 1, 2015. WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

WIOA has two tiers of partners: Core Program Partners and Required Partners.

The Core Program Partners who are required to collaborate and participate in the One-Stop System include: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth; Wagner-Peyser labor exchange; Adult Education and Literacy; and Vocational Rehabilitation. Core Program Partners are in the common performance measures pool and must work closely together to achieve success.

Required Program Partners must participate in the MOU process and provide coordinated services with the comprehensive Workforce Centers. Required Program Partners include the four Core Program Partners as well as: Career and Technical Education, Title V Older Americans, Job Corps, Native American Programs, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, Veterans, YouthBuild, Trade Act, Community Services Block Grant, HUD, Unemployment Compensation, Second Chance, and TANF. If any of the required partners do not have funding in the Western Arkansas local area, their participation is waived.

Providing businesses with the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global, regional, and local economies is central to Arkansas's vision in implementing the Federal Act. Arkansas's workforce system provides a talent pipeline through the establishment of partnerships between State and local entities, businesses,

economic development, education, and community stakeholders. To ensure that the workforce system efficiently meets the needs of both the businesses and the jobseekers that it serves, Arkansas's workforce agencies have jointly developed the State's workforce plan with the intent that this vision is conducted in each of the local workforce development areas through their Workforce Centers.

The OSO will be the point of contact regarding issues pertaining to customer complaints that are substantive to the required partners operating in the comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Centers. This will include convening partner meetings that include all core program partners, required partners and key stakeholders regarding One-Stop operation issues on a regular basis and to advise the Board Staff on partner operational challenges and successes.

In support of the WIOA MOU the OSO responsibilities will also include:

- Coordinating service delivery among workforce delivery system partners.
- Managing hours of operation at the comprehensive Centers.
- Facilitating customer flow, customer service, initial assessment, resource room usage, tracking, and referral processes are conducted as agreed upon as directed by board policy and in the WIOA MOU.
- Communicating Board and Administrative policies and procedures to all partners.
- Supply the Board and Board Staff reports on Center activities.
- Communicate with partners prior to regional meetings to determine suitable agenda and allow partner additions to the agenda.
- Provide minutes of regional partner meetings after each meeting to partners and the local workforce board.
- Collect and provide performance data on all partners to the local workforce board.

The OSO will submit a written and verbal report on work accomplished and challenges encountered on a quarterly basis to the Board. In addition, the OSO will gather data for the Board from the partners on a quarterly basis including common measure information; tracking incoming clients; resource room usage; and program specific referrals as outlined in the WIOA MOU.

The OSO is required to maintain a workspace in the Fort Smith comprehensive workforce center and to coordinate the one-stop operation of the Mena affiliate center listed on page 3.

Submission Information and Requirements

General Submission Information

To be considered for funding, an entity must provide a submittal for this Request for Proposal (RFP) including supporting documentation in accordance with the instructions in this RFP. When evaluating a submittal, the One-Stop Committee will consider how well the bidder has complied with these instructions and provided the required information. The One-Stop Committee reserves the right to request clarifications from any bidder regarding information in their submittals and may request an oral presentation if deemed appropriate and necessary to make a final recommendation.

Bidders may request clarification to comply with instructions during the Question-and-Answer period May 5, 2023 through May 16, 2023 by emailing Dennis Williamson at dwilliamson@wapdd.org. The One-Stop Committee will discuss and respond to all questions by May 23, 2023 and post the answers on <https://www.westernarkansasworks.com/>.

Bidders shall not direct questions or have conversations regarding this Request for Proposal with any Board Members, Chief Elected Officials, or Western Arkansas Board support staff except during the official “question” period. All questions must be communicated through dwilliamson@wapdd.org. Questions submitted should be electronic and include in the subject line *Questions – Western Arkansas Operator Procurement*. Questions without the assigned subject line will not be considered.

The submittal, as well as any reference materials presented, must be typed in English in at least 12-point font and must be on standard portrait 8 ½” by 11” size with no less than one-inch margins. Landscape orientation containing charts, spreadsheets, and oversize exhibits is permissible. Submittals are limited to twenty-two (22) pages or less including attachments and supportive information.

Funding

Funding of the One-Stop function is currently around \$50,000 annually as outlined and agreed upon in the MOU/IFA. At its discretion, the board may amend contracts based on performance and funding availability. One-Stop operation budget should be inclusive and detail all expenses. Costs cannot be provided as in-kind contributions.

Compliance Requirements

Any award of a contract under this Request for Proposal will be subject to applicable requirements of the funding sources, including the U.S. Department of Labor, the State of Arkansas, and the Board. These terms and conditions include, without limitation, provisions regarding reporting, insurance, indemnification, audits, nondiscrimination, minority and women's business enterprise requirements, veterans' priority of service, conflict of interest and local hiring provisions.

Available Funds Note

It is suggested that the organization has a minimum of three months' operating capital on-hand throughout the term of the contract.

Public Records

Responders are advised that documents in possession of the Board are considered public records and subject to disclosure under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

Contractor Qualifications and Responsibilities

All businesses/organizations must meet a minimum level of administrative and fiscal capacity to contract for the requested services. Therefore, the successful bidder must provide the following Documentation of Qualifications within a seven-day period after notification. Failure to satisfactorily provide the following documentation could result in disqualification of proposed award.

Documentation of Organization's Qualifications:

- Legal entity - Proof of Incorporation, 501(c) (3), etc. and designation from the IRS of tax-exempt status, if applicable. Must submit document proving legal entity(s).
- Written personnel policies. Must submit table of contents of personnel policies.
- Written conflict of interest policy for staff and board. Must submit copy of Conflict-of-Interest Policy.
- Have an ongoing quality assurance process for services. Must submit description of process.
- For organizations that have more than one revenue source, must submit revenue documentation identifying the various sources of the amounts.
- Proven fiscal capacity including capacity for fund accounting. Must submit bound copy of most recent formal audit completed within last year. Must satisfactorily address all findings.
- Verify that the program has procured and will maintain during the life of the contract the following required insurance coverage: professional liability, errors, and omissions; commercial general liability insurance, including contractual liability insurance; business automobile liability (if applicable); worker's compensation coverage; and employee dishonesty insurance. Must submit copies of certificate of insurance with contract.

Submittal Content and Scoring

Proposals will be evaluated on Three Parts:

- Part I Required Format and Content in #1 below
- Part II Experience & Approach (21 points)
- Part III Budget Detail and Staffing Structure (9 points)

The top two scores in Part II will move onto consideration and analysis of budget detail and proposed service levels.

1. **All submittals must contain the following documents in this order to be considered:**
 - a. Entire submittal cannot exceed twenty-two pages
 - b. Title Page Including Entity, Contact Person (email, phone, address)
 - c. Executive Summary (no longer than 2 page)
 - d. Proposal Narrative
 - e. Budget and Budget Narrative (no more than 4 pages)
 - f. Three References Attesting to Relevant Experience with contact information

2. **Experience and Approach (21) points)**

One-Stop Operator

 - a. Describe specific experience with serving as One-Stop Operator.
 - b. Detail the role and responsibilities that will be undertaken as One-Stop Operator.
 - c. Provide a detailed description of a proposed client flow to ensure Core Program Partners are included in upfront services.
 - d. Details of the proposed management of the resource room.
 - e. Detailed information on how staff and partner training will be provided.
 - f. Provide information on experience the organization has regarding One-Stop Certification achievement and maintenance.
 - g. Describe how system and Center orientations will be provided.

3. **Budget and Budget Narrative (9 points)**

Based on the current budget information provided under the *Project Budget* section of this Request for Proposal, provide a detailed anticipated budget.

 - a. Staffing details should include time at each center and anticipated cost.
 - b. Detailed operational expenses.
 - c. Value based additional cost detail.