



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion

Consultation Services

Issued: June 26, 2020

Updated: July 21, 2020

Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC)

A Proud Partner of America's Job Center of California Network

525 Wall Street, Chico, CA 95928

(530) 892-9600

NoRTEC Is an Equal Opportunity Employer and provider of employment and training programs.

Michael Cross, Executive Director

mcross@ncen.org

SECTION 1: PURPOSE, FUNDING AND BACKGROUND

RFP PURPOSE AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) seeks the services from qualified firms and/or individuals to provide Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion Activities under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Business Services in the NoRTEC region are currently delivered by One Stop Career Center staff, with assistance from NoRTEC staff. This RFP solicits proposals for Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion Activities that go beyond existing One Stop business services to address the needs of specific industry sectors or other identified regional workforce challenges. These activities will complement and support the region's workforce development system. All work performed by this solicitation will be under the direction of the NoRTEC Executive Director.

Bidders may propose to provide one or more Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion activities in one, various or all eleven counties with the 11-county NoRTEC region.

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL AND DUE DATE

NoRTEC will receive proposals until July 23, 2020. Proposals must be e-mailed to:

Andrea Campos, Director of Program Administration at acampos@ncen.org
NoRTEC
525 Wall Street
Chico, CA 95928
(530)892-9600, x205

E-mailed proposals must be formatted as PDF. Proposals in other file formats will not be reviewed. Faxed proposals will not be accepted.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS –

RFP Release Date	June 26, 2020
Bidder's Informational Meeting	As requested. All questions and responses will be posted on NoRTEC's website at www.ncen.org .
Proposal Deadline	July 23, 2020 open until December 31, 2020
Formal Review of Proposals	Week of July 27, 2020 ongoing as needed
Bidder Interview	TBD
Award of Contract	August 3, 2020 – December 31, 2020 Pending contract negotiations and funding
Anticipated Contract Start Date	TBD

**This schedule is subject to change, please continually check NoRTEC's website at www.ncen.org*

RFP CONTACT

RFP Contact Person and mailing address for questions about the proposal process or technical issues:

Andrea Campos, Director of Program Administration
Industry Sector Partnership Coordinator
NoRTEC
525 Wall Street, Chico CA 95928
acampos@ncen.org
(530) 892-9600 x209

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

OVERVIEW OF NORTEC

The Northern Rural Training & Employment Consortium (NoRTEC) headquartered in Chico, California, administers Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs in eleven Northern California counties. Established in 1983, NoRTEC is led by a Governing Board and Workforce Development Board (WDB) that oversee a broad range of programs and initiatives. The WDB includes representatives from small, medium and large businesses, labor organizations, education, economic development, community based organizations and one-stop partners.

NoRTEC is a special district organized under a Joint Powers Agreement to provide United States Department of Labor (USDOL) Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) services and has established contracts with nonprofit agencies in eleven counties to ensure job seekers and businesses have access to a comprehensive array of job training and employment services. The counties in NoRTEC service area are Butte, Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity. The NoRTEC Administrative Entity is located in Chico, California. Additional information about NoRTEC can be obtained at www.ncen.org.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) OVERVIEW

On July 22, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. WIOA provides new authorizing legislation for programs previously authorized under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The Act began implementation on July 1, 2015.

The WIOA legislation includes heightened emphasis on addressing the needs of local and regional businesses and aligning service strategies with regional labor markets and economic development activities. Business Services under WIOA may include:

- Marketing of business services to area employers;
- Coordinating to improve linkages among the local workforce investment system, other resources not traditionally offered through the system, and employers;
- Informing the use of WIOA training funds to connect employers with skilled job-seekers;
- Developing and implementing industry sector strategies (including strategies involving industry partnerships, regional skills alliances, industry skill panels and sectoral skills partnerships);
- Developing and delivering innovative workforce investment strategies for employers such as career pathways, skills upgrading, skill standard development and apprenticeships;
- Assistance to area employers in managing reductions in force in coordination with Rapid Response activities.

NORTEC BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND LAYOFF AVERSION ACTIVITIES

All Employer Engagement and Layoff Aversion activities must comply with the State of California Employment Development Directive No. [WSD 16-04](#), “Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities” and [WSD19-14](#) “Directive on Emergency Cooperation Agreements”.

NoRTEC intends to fund specific Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion Activities within NoRTEC’s workforce development system that:

- Establishes NoRTEC and its provider network as trusted and dependable partners addressing the talent and service needs of businesses;
- Are specialized in and focused on meeting the needs of businesses;
- Build long-term relationships in order to better understand and address business needs;
- Refer businesses to a network of services to support human resources development and business growth;
- Contribute to designing and implementing regional, industry-driven sector strategies;
- Reflect deep understanding of the needs of local job-seekers;
- Ensures coordinated support during a catastrophic event; and
- Establish linkages between employers and job-seeker services by coordinating closely with the NoRTEC One Stop system.

Business services in the NoRTEC region are currently delivered by One Stop Career Center staff, with assistance from NoRTEC staff. This RFP solicits proposals for Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion Activities that go beyond existing One Stop business services to address the needs of specific industry sectors or other identified regional workforce challenges that have occurred due to the current health pandemic and previous natural disasters. These activities will complement and support the region’s workforce development system.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Bidders under this RFP should align proposals toward the implementation of WIOA. Guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has been issued in the form of Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) and Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRMs), which are directing employment and training system activities. The California Employment Development Department (EDD) has also issued directives on WIOA Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion implementation.

SECTION 3: ELIGIBLE RESPONDANTS AND DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The following entities are eligible to serve as lead applicants as long as the conditions described below are met:

- Qualified consulting firms and/or individuals
- Business consortia and/or associations, including entities such as chambers of commerce, economic development departments
- Economic development authorities, agencies or private consultants
- Non-profit organizations or associations serving as regional or local workforce intermediaries
- Educational and workforce development agencies
- Local government organizations

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

NoRTEC seeks an individual and or/entity that meets the following qualifications:

- Experience in developing multiple public sector and private economic development plans and projects
- Knowledge of regional industries and employers
- Demonstrated experience attracting private and public investment
- Possesses a strong business acumen and professional presence
- Ability to work with various demographics, workforce development and education partners in the eleven county region
- Knowledge of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Knowledge of the local eleven county region that include demographic, economic, political and social factors
- Knowledge of disaster and emergency rapid response activities

Additionally, if the entity has been disbarred, suspended or otherwise determined to be ineligible to receive funds by an action of any governmental agency; or the entity has not complied with an official order of any agency of the State of California or the United States Department of Labor to repay disallowed costs incurred during its conducted projects or services; or the entity's

previous contract(s) with NoRTEC have been terminated for cause; or the entity's name appears on the State's convicted Proposers list; or for any other good and just cause, the entity will not be considered and should not submit a proposal.

SECTION 4: CONTRACT PERIOD

NoRTEC anticipates funding contract(s) for twelve months (one year). Pending satisfactory performance, compliance, and available funding, these contracts may be renewable on an annual basis until June 30, 2022.

SECTION 5: CONTRACT TERMS

NoRTEC anticipates awarding one or more Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion Consulting Contracts for the 2018-2019 contract year. The terms of the contract will depend on the nature of the services. The amount available for these services is subject to change based upon the actual allocation and/or changes approved by NoRTEC.

Programs funded by NoRTEC under this RFP will be expected to make adjustments in programming to comply with future WIOA regulations.

SECTION 6: SCOPE OF WORK AND PROPOSAL FORMAT

SCOPE OF WORK

NoRTEC is seeking to identify Business Services and Layoff Aversion consultants to provide services consistent with EDD Directive WSD 16-04. These services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Business Engagement Activities

- Build relationships with national, state, regional and local business services providers in order to link business customers to available resources and services, i.e. business start-up assistance, loans, industry roundtables, human resources assistance, etc.
- Develop strong partnership and align strategies with regional cities and counties and economic development organizations
- Refer businesses to a network of services and supports, through required and recommended partnerships
- Refer and connect businesses to appropriate incumbent worker training
- Provide technical assistance to NoRTEC Industry Sector Partnerships
- Collaborate with NoRTEC staff to develop and implement an effective outreach and marketing plan to engage employers.

Layoff Aversion Activities

The contractor will deliver comprehensive layoff aversion strategies and activities for transitioning businesses to prevent or minimize unemployment.

These services may include:

- Ongoing engagement, partnership, and relationship-building activities with businesses in order to create an environment for successful layoff aversion efforts;
- Providing assistance to employers in managing reductions in force, which may include early identification of firms at risk of layoffs and assessment of the needs of and options for at-risk firms;
- Convening service partners, such as the Comprehensive One-Stop Career Center, to deliver services to affected businesses and workers;
- Connecting businesses to resources such as loans, business assistance programs, market analyses and economic development activities to address needs and prevent layoffs;
- Work with NoRTEC staff to developing systems and processes for identifying and gathering information for early warning of potential layoffs or opportunities for layoff aversion;
- Analyzing and acting upon data and information on dislocations and other economic activity in the state, region, and local area;
- Updating and expanding labor market information for NoRTEC's already developed Regional Labor Market Database and Quarterly Occupational Outlooks.
- Providing quarterly reports on NoRTEC's labor market information that provides trends, patterns, statistics and figures that help NoRTEC develop strategies to retain, attract and expand jobs.
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with other Federal, State and local agencies and officials, business associations, technical councils, industry councils, labor organizations, and other public and private organizations, as applicable.

The Business Engagement and Layoff Aversion Contractor must coordinate and cooperate with NoRTEC staff and NoRTEC contracted service providers to achieve the goals stated above and to adopt a business engagement and layoff aversion function that is responsive to the changing needs of industry and the regional economy.

Bidders must describe strategies that will be employed to effectively conduct the activities and achieve the goals described above.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT

All proposals must be organized and assembled according to the requirements of this section and in the order described:

1. Proposal Cover Sheet. The cover sheet should include the name of the respondent, type of organization, address and contact information and name of person authorized to submit the proposal on behalf of the organization.
2. Executive Summary. Each proposal must include an executive summary which at minimum describes the respondent organization, summarizes its relevant experience and qualifications and outlines the scope of services being proposed. The Executive Summary is limited to two (2) pages.
3. Narrative. A written narrative statement to include:
 - Experience and background of bidder in providing services requested in this RFP, including the ability to meet specifications, and the technical skills to accomplish the work. Bidder should exhibit knowledge of the national workforce system funded in part by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the relationship of the system with key stakeholders.
 - Names, qualifications and experience of personnel to be assigned to the project.
 - A budget for the proposed activities that includes (hourly rates for all staff), materials, travel expenditures and other costs required to perform activities in accordance with the scope of work.
4. Optional Bidder Attachments. Optional attachments are limited to five (5) pages.

SECTION 7: EVALUATION CRITERIA

All complete proposals will be evaluated according to the guidelines set forth in this RFP. All bids will be evaluated based on responsiveness to this RFP.

Negotiations will be started with the bidder(s) whose proposal(s) has been judged most appropriate with regard to all factors, including product quality and cost. The lowest-priced proposal will not necessarily be selected, as cost is only one of the factors that will be considered. Quality is a very important consideration. An established history of past satisfactory experience in doing business in California as confirmed by positive evaluations by references, product evaluations from web and print resources and comparison of the Proposer's service proposals will contribute to the selection.

The following criteria will form the basis upon which NoRTEC will evaluate proposals. Proposals that meet the mandatory (complete and compliant) requirements, as stated above, will be evaluated with the following:

All proposals must include:

I. Organizational Experience and Capacity – 50 points

- Application must provide evidence that the applicant has the fiscal, administrative and performance management capacity to administer funding streams. Scoring under this criterion will be based on the extent to which applications provide:
 - Ability to manage and maintain fiscal records
 - Adequate and qualified staff
- Mission, history, accomplishments
- Organization structure and staffing
- Relevant projects and services and their recent outcomes
- Administrative and data management experience and capacity
- Fiscal management experience and capacity
- Experience related to NoRTEC system and providers
- Summary information on proposed subcontractors (if any)

II. Existing and Proposed Staffing – 25 points

- Roles and experience by position (attached resumes and job descriptions)

III. Proposer compensation is reasonable according to their qualifications in the area of experience, skills, abilities and education – 20 points

Considerations:

Proposer statement on compensation includes the following elements:

- Proposer's cost seems reasonable within current business environment
- Understanding of proposer's background is clearly identified
- If proposer is a for-profit entity, profit is separately stated
- Proposer is agreeable to potential negotiation.

IV. Proposer business status is a certified minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned business and/or proposer's business is located/operated in a labor surplus designated area. – 5 points

TOTAL POINTS – 100

COMPLIANCE REVIEW

Upon receipt of proposals, staff will review submitted proposals for completeness and compliance with the terms and conditions of the RFP. All proposals must adhere to the required format and in order to be competitive, must include all of the requested information. Proposals that do not adhere to these requirements will be determined non-responsive and will not be considered for funding. NoRTEC reserves the right to reject any proposal submitted.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

NoRTEC will assemble an RFP Scoring Panel of staff and industry experts who will score and rank all proposals that meet the compliance requirements described below. The RFP Scoring Panel will score and rank all proposals using the criteria described within the RFP, and specifically examine the competence of the Respondents and suitability of their proposals. The RFP Scoring Panel may assign each proposal a maximum of 100 points. Panel members will review and rank each proposal and, based on their knowledge and assessment of the proposals, recommend respondents for designations and contract negotiation.

REVIEW PROCESS

NoRTEC may, at its discretion, request presentations by or meetings with any proposers to clarify or negotiate modifications to the proposals. However, NoRTEC reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, proposals should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms the Proposer can provide from both technical and price standpoints. NoRTEC anticipates awarding the contract to the proposers with the highest total points.

ACCESS TO SCORE SHEET AND COMMENTS

Individual score sheets and comments used during the evaluation process may be provided in the form of summaries as prepared by NoRTEC staff. Actual individual scores sheets will not be disclosed. These summaries will be provided to applicants of the RFP who submit a written request. Requests for this information shall be responded to within ten (10) business days of the final contract/agreement recommendations and any appeals submitted. The purpose for releasing this information is for technical assistance and continuous improvement and not for purpose of an appeal.

NEGOTIATION/AGREEMENT

All Respondents shall designate an authorized negotiator. (The name and contact information for this person must be included on the title page of the proposal.) This designated person must be empowered to make binding commitments for the successful Respondent and its subcontractors, if any. NoRTEC reserves the right to negotiate the final terms of the contract/agreement with the successful Respondent(s). Items that may be negotiated include but are not limited to the scope of work, the staff as proposed, the implementation schedule, subcontractors and the final award amount.

NOTIFICATION OF AWARD

It is expected that a decision will be made within 60 days of proposal submittal (see schedule in Section 1, above). Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful proposer, all proposers will be informed in writing of the name of the successful firm(s)/individual.

SECTION 8: DISCLAIMERS AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

At the discretion of NoRTEC, if it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum will be provided to all known recipients of this RFP and posted on NoRTEC's website. Any clarification will become an addendum to this RFP.

Respondents are responsible for checking the website frequently to remain informed about the procurement process and other information that may affect this RFP (e.g. grant funding availability, changes to industry sectors, and revisions to the timeline).

RIGHT TO CANCEL

NoRTEC reserves the right to cancel all or any part of this RFP at any time without prior notice and reserves the right to modify the RFP process and timeline as is deemed necessary.

NONRESPONSIVE PROPOSALS

Proposals may be judged nonresponsive and removed from further consideration if any of the following occur:

- The proposal is not received on a timely basis in accordance with the terms of this RFP.
- The proposal does not include all of the specified elements.
- The proposal is not adequate to form a judgment by the reviewers that the proposed undertaking would comply with all of the auditing standards and requirements specified in this RFP.
- The proposal indicates that the audit reports would not be made available to NoRTEC in the time frames outlined in this RFP.

MINORITY BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

NoRTEC, as a recipient of State and Federal funds, subscribes to the practices below and will fully comply with Federal, State, and Local laws and directives governing non-discrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action in all activities.

- No person shall be discriminated against whatsoever on the grounds of race, religion, color, age, sex, physical handicap or national origin.
- No person shall because of race, religion, color, age, sex, physical handicap or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded entirely or in part by the City, the State, or the Federal Government.
- Affirmative Action shall be taken by all levels of governments where necessary to support the underlying objectives of said anti-discrimination policies.

To further support policies relative to affirmative action, equal opportunity and non-discrimination, NoRTEC will make every effort to ensure that Minority Business Enterprises have the maximum practicable opportunity to participate in the procurement of goods, professional services and supplies. Bidders are encouraged to indicate in their RFP response if they are a certified minority business as certified through the State of California.

THE APPEALS PROCESS

NoRTEC must receive written notice of the Proposer's intent to appeal the decision within five (5) working days of receipt of notice of award. Proposer will have a total of 15 days in which to submit a written appeal of NoRTEC's decisions. All grievances arising out of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or this RFP must be filed according to NoRTEC's established grievance procedures.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is the policy of NoRTEC to prohibit ex-parte communication with any board member, NoRTEC staff, consultants or other persons serving as an evaluator during the procurement process. Respondents that directly contact board members or evaluators risk elimination of their proposals from further consideration.

ADDITIONAL DISCLAIMERS

1. This RFP does not commit the NoRTEC Workforce Development Board (WDB) to award a contract.
2. No costs will be paid to cover the expense of preparing a proposal or procuring a contract for services or supplies under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
3. Proposers selected for funding must also ensure compliance with the following, as applicable: U.S. DOL regulations 20 CFR Part 652; 29 CFR Parts 96, 93, 37, 2 and 98; and 48 CFR Part 31; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars A-21, A-87, A-110, A-122, and A-133 as applicable.
4. All proposers must ensure equal opportunity to all individuals. No individual in the NoRTEC Regional area shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of or subjected to discrimination under any Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funded program or activity because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, English proficiency, or political affiliation or belief.
5. All proposers must ensure access to individuals with disabilities pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act.