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Leading the Way:

Access. Success. Impact.

West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

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ADDENDUM #1

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS #15045 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Appendix 1 indicates that two LEA Grant Implementation Progress Meetings, GU College Access and Success Advisory Board Meetings, and five annual Site Coordinator (SC) meetings will take place each year. What are the approximate dates for these meetings each year, where will they take place, and who is expected to attend each meeting?

ANSWER:

- a. The two LEA grant implementation progress meetings will take place in each of the 10 service counties and will include a variety of key stakeholders at the county level. The first meeting will take place in January/February 2015 and continue to meet approximately every six months for the entire grant cycle. External evaluators may choose to observe some of these meetings throughout the grant cycle.
 - b. The first site coordinator meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in Charleston, WV on December 2, 2014. The external evaluator will be expected to attend this meeting to distribute paper surveys and/or provide instructions for administering online surveys. Site coordinator meetings will generally take place in Charleston, WV approximately every other month and a member of the external evaluation team should be available to attend if needed.
2. While the RFP indicates the external evaluator will be required to submit bi-annual progress reports, Appendix 1 uses the term "mid-year" and "year-end" evaluation reports. Can HEPC please clarify the similarities and differences among these reports including the external evaluator's responsibilities for each?

ANSWER:

- a. We expect two progress reports annually, one to be delivered every six months.

3. What roles will the external evaluator be expected to play in supporting HEPC in the submission of required reports to the Federal government every two years?

ANSWER:

- a. The external evaluator will be required to work, in conjunction with the coordinator of research and evaluation, to produce results associated with each of the goals and objectives outlined in the grant's proposal. There is no template for this report.
4. What specific tasks does HEPC anticipate will be required of the external evaluator to assist in the preparation of the Annual Performance Report (APR)?

ANSWER:

- a. The external evaluator will be required to provide all student and parent survey results. The external evaluator will work, in conjunction with the coordinator of research and evaluation, to produce results associated with each of the goals and objectives outlined in the grant's proposal.
5. Table 1.1 in the RFP illustrates that a new cohort of priority seniors will be served by WVGU each year for years 1 – 5 and 7. However, Table 3.2.4 indicates priority cohorts will be surveyed only every two years. Could HEPC please clarify if the external evaluator is expected to survey priority cohorts each year or every two years?

ANSWER:

- a. Priority students are to only be surveyed every-other-year.
6. Can HEPC please clarify the expectations surrounding the administration of parent surveys for priority cohort students? It appears from Table 3.2.4 that parents are only to be surveyed for the 2019 and 2021 priority cohorts.

ANSWER:

- a. Your understanding is correct. Priority parents will be surveyed at that time and serve as comparison groups for the cohort parents. However cohort students and parents are to be surveyed every year.
7. On page 9 of the RFP it is stated that Year 1 student and parent surveys must be completed no later than December 2015. However, it is also stated that baseline data and benchmarks must be established no later than March 1, 2015. We assume the first date is an error and that the actual completion date for student and parent surveys is intended to be December 2014. Can HEPC please confirm?

ANSWER:

- a. You are correct. Baseline surveys must be completed no later than December 2014.
8. Can HEPC please provide a description of what services, if any, will be provided through WVGU to students and parents in the retrospective and future comparison cohorts (i.e., C2019 and C2021)?

ANSWER:

- a. This will vary depending upon each school and their culture. All students will have access to the state's free college and career planning website: cfwv.com. Otherwise, the only direct services that these students may receive could result in a "spill-over" effect. For example, if WV GEAR UP sponsors a motivational speaker at a GEAR UP school—it is possible that the entire student body would be invited to participate since there would not be an additional charge. However, this will vary drastically from school to school and is difficult to predict.
9. Appendix 1 indicates that the evaluation will utilize propensity score matching (PSM) at the student and school levels to select comparison groups for the required impact study. For student level matching, is it expected that students from the 2019 and 2021 retrospective and future comparison groups will serve as the sampling frame? Alternatively, is it HEPC's expectation that the *student-level* comparison group for the impact study will be drawn from the population of non-GEAR UP schools in WV?

ANSWER:

- a. Yes and Yes. However, we realize that evaluation designs can change/evolve over time.
10. It appears that HEPC is interested in comparing postsecondary outcomes in Year 7 between the class of 2020 and the 2019 retrospective comparison cohort. How does HEPC anticipate differences in these outcomes can be attributed to the GEAR UP program when the 2019 retrospective comparison cohort will receive priority services through WVGU during their senior year?

ANSWER:

- a. Given that priority students only will receive services for one year and cohort services will receive services for seven years, it is our hope that the external evaluation team will utilize its knowledge to best determine how outcomes can, if appropriate, be attributed to GEAR UP.
11. Will HEPC provide services to all members of the class of 2020 during their freshman year of college or will services be limited to a subset of cohort members (e.g., those who attend public institutions of higher education within the state of WV)? If a subset, can

HEPC provide more details about which students are anticipated to be served during college?

ANSWER:

- a. WV GEAR UP will provide broad services to all students who enroll in postsecondary education, but will likely provide intensive services to students who enroll in one of our public two or four year institutions. This service plan will developed in year 5 of the grant cycle and submitted to our federal program officer for approval

12. Appendix 1 indicates that HEPC will hire an internal evaluator and includes a detailed evaluation plan for WVGU. This plan appears to state that additional research will be pursued regarding the impact of certain GEAR UP components by HEPC staff (e.g., texting). Could HEPC please clarify the internal and external evaluators' roles in the WVGU evaluation, including the external evaluator's role, if any, in the additional research that is planned by HEPC?

ANSWER:

- a. For the purpose of this RFP, we are only asking for your proposal to address the items outlined in the GEAR UP grant.
- b. Other research will be conducted with Dr. Ben Castleman regarding the impact of a texting intervention which we will utilize with past and new GEAR UP students.
- c. Additionally, WV GEAR UP will hire a full time coordinator of research and evaluation to coordinate all research and evaluation activities.
- d. Finally, HEPC expects to receive additional college access and success grant funds in the future which may result in additional internal research and perhaps call for additional external research. Should this happen, HEPC may issue an additional external RFP.

13. Please release a copy of the grant submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, including Appendices 1-3 as soon as possible.

ANSWER:

- a. All appendices are available along with exhibits and the full RFP at the following link: <http://www.wvhepc.com/resources/purchasing-and-finance/>

14. What are the grant personnel--school-based, district & state?

ANSWER:

- a. Please see Appendix 1, pp. 14-15.

15. Describe the state student information system. How current is the academic data?

ANSWER:

- a. To learn more about the state information system, please visit:
<http://wveis.k12.wv.us/>

16. Describe services currently contracted for from the data web-portal mentioned in the RFP. Does this include student and parent surveys? Will these services be continued throughout the grant period at the state expense, or should this be in the evaluator's tasks?

ANSWER:

- a. The current data warehouse web portal does link to parent and student survey data. As noted on page 10 of the RFP, section 3.2.6, you can learn more about the services provided by visiting:
<https://gearup.xcaliburscribe.com/SCRIBE/SCRIBEInfo.aspx>
Supporting costs associated with a ready-to-use data warehouse is the evaluator's task.

17. How much cost share/match on the evaluator's part is requested or what is deemed appropriate? What is allowable?

ANSWER:

- a. There is not a specific amount of cost share/match required to receive this contract. We ask that each evaluator offer some form of match. Often, this comes in the form of in-kind.

18. What are the responsibilities of district and school based personnel regarding data collection?

ANSWER:

- a. Regional and school based staff are required to collect and report student participation data in a secure online data warehouse portal. School based staff are required to administer the surveys as well.

19. The Gear UP program requires survey questions for parent and student surveys. Are additional evaluation instruments required to be submitted in response to the RFP?

ANSWER:

- a. This is not a requirement. However, it is preferred. Additionally, please note that the survey instrument must be developed in conjunction with full time GEAR UP staff and must consist of multiple question (not just those required for Federal reporting). We anticipate that surveys will include approximately 20 questions.

20. Our data warehouses are designed to interact with school districts' student information systems (SIS) to allow for easy transfer of student information necessary for evaluation. This would be important for such a large cohort, eliminating manual entry. Will your SIS be capable of interacting with our system?

ANSWER:

- a. Unfortunately, we cannot answer this question given that we do not know the specifics of your SIS system. However, if you are adhering to national best practices, it is highly likely that this transfer could occur.
21. Are there legal considerations associated with the state allowing our use of encrypted student identifying information?

ANSWER:

- a. Unfortunately, we cannot answer this question given that we do not know the specifics of your of your encrypted system. However, if you are adhering to national best practices, it is highly unlikely that this would be an issue.
22. Can you provide reviewer comments pertaining to the evaluation plan presented in the approved application?

ANSWER:

- a. No. We have not received our official reviewer comments from the US Department of Education.
23. Was another entity involved in writing the evaluation plan submitted with the grant?

ANSWER:

- a. We worked in conjunction with outside evaluators in preparing the evaluation section of our proposal.
24. Has there been any work done to identify the schools/students for a comparison group? Or would the evaluator need to develop the process for creating the comparison group?

ANSWER:

- a. No. This would be a role of the evaluator once a contract is in place.
25. Define your expectations for how the peer review process is expected to be conducted around the sustainability research questions outlined in the RFP on page 9?

ANSWER:

- a. It is the hope of WV GEAR UP that much of our work proves sustainable based upon the interventions outlined in the grant. Furthermore, it is the hope of WV

GEAR UP that research collected results in multiple peer-reviewed journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

26. Are faculty members employed by West Virginia State University (WVSU) in Institute, WV prohibited from participation in a CBT UC proposal either individually or as part of a sub-contract from CBT UC to WVSU?

ANSWER:

- a. Yes. As noted in Section 2.2, in order to assure the integrity of the evaluation and unbiased commentary, no employees of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission or the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical Education will be considered. Employees of the following West Virginia GEAR UP regional sites will be excluded from consideration: Central West Virginia **(WV State University regional site)**: Southern West Virginia (Concord University regional site): and South Western West Virginia (Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College regional site). Employees of any other State or Partnership GEAR UP grants will also be excluded from consideration.

27. On pp. 1 and 2 of 17 of the RFP, the Proposal Do Date is noted as October 23, 2014 yet on p. 3 of 17 the Bid Due Date is noted as October 30, 2014. Which date is correct?

ANSWER:

- a. October 23, 2014 at 3:00 PM EST. A revised page is included with this Addendum as Attachment #1.

28. What is the expected contract type for this effort (firm fixed price, time and materials, cost reimbursement)?

ANSWER:

- a. It is anticipated that a fixed price contract will be awarded. Invoicing strategy is open to negotiation and will be discussed with the apparent successful vendor and the time of contract award.

29. May bidders add applicable General and Administrative expenses to travel and other direct costs?

ANSWER:

- a. Travel will be reimbursed at the current GSA rates. Administrative expenses may be added but the % mark-up must be identified in the vendor's response to the RFP.

REVISED PAGE AS PER ADDENDUM #1

if any, will be answered by addendum and posted to the purchasing webpage identified in 1.4 above. It is the Potential Bidder's responsibility to check the webpage above for current information regarding this RFP. When submitting questions, please reference **RFP** in the subject line of the email. In addition, questions submitted in an attachment should be provided as a MS Word document, not in PDF format.

- 1.6 **Proposal Submission.** Please deliver an original and four (4) copies (plus a complete copy in PDF format on a thumb drive) of the proposal in a sealed opaque envelope or package to the following address on or before 3:00 PM EST:

Mary Blashford
Director of Procurement
RFP # 15045
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
1018 Kanawha Boulevard East, Suite 700
Charleston, WV 25301

The outside of the envelope or package(s) should be clearly marked:

Mary Blashford
Director of Procurement, WVHEPC
RFP # 15045
WV GEAR UP External Evaluation
Bid Due Date: October 23, 2014 @ 3:00 PM EST

Proposals received after the due time and date will not be considered and will be returned unopened. It is the Bidder's (Proposer's) sole responsibility to ensure timely delivery.

- 1.7 **Interviews.** Discussions and interviews may be held with Bidders under final consideration prior to making a selection for award; however, the RFP may be awarded without such discussions or interviews. In the event that mutually acceptable terms cannot be reached within a reasonable period with the most advantageous firm, HEPC reserves the right to undertake negotiations with the next most advantageous firm, etc., without starting a new procurement process.
- 1.8 **Oral Statements and Commitments.** Any oral representations made or assumed to be made during discussions held between the Bidder's representatives and WVHEPC personnel are not binding. Only the information issued in writing and added to the RFP specifications file by an official written addendum are binding.
- 1.9 **Rejection of Proposals.** WVHEPC shall select the best value solution according to the evaluation criteria. However, the Director of Procurement reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, in part or in whole at his discretion. The Director reserves the right to withdraw this RFP at any time and for any reason. Submission of, or receipt by the Director confers no rights upon the Bidder nor obligates WVHEPC in any manner.