REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION
RFP #22079 GEAR UP EVALUATION SERVICES

ADDENDUM #1 – OCTOBER 18, 2021

1. **Question:** In discussion of price on page 20, the RFP says, "Indirect costs (may not exceed 8% on eligible expenses) and Cost-share match (WVGU requires that its external evaluator provide some form of cost-share match)". Is that correct? Is it the case that this indirect cost cap and cost-share match are required for the external evaluator?

   Answer: It is correct that indirect costs may not exceed 8% on eligible expenses. Though WVGU would prefer some form of cost-share/match, it will not be used as a basis for disqualification.

2. **Question:** Was an evaluator listed in WVHEPC's proposal to the United States Department of Education? If so, is the evaluator eligible to respond to this RFP?

   Answer: No evaluator was named in the application.

3. **Question:** Will the evaluator be required to enter into data sharing agreements with each institution and school district separately from any agreements that may be in place or planned for the institutions and WVHEPC?

   Answer: The evaluator will enter into a multi-party data sharing agreement that includes the West Virginia Department of Education, who represents each one of the secondary school districts and their schools, the WVHEPC, who secures enrollment and degree attainment data from the postsecondary institutions directly, and the developer of our data warehouse, which is currently Xcalibur.

4. **Question:** We note that many of the evaluation activities and research questions are already in place. Is WVHEPC looking for an evaluator to solely carry out this work, or is WVHEPC looking for an evaluator to build upon the current evaluation with additional data collection and research questions?

   Answer: We are looking for an evaluator who will carry out the research plan and answer the questions delineated in the RFP since these were included in our funded proposal to the US Department of Education. However, there is flexibility in the contents of some of our instruments, such as the student and parent surveys, and the instruments used in the HEROs evaluation.

5. **Question:** Did an evaluator help you write the evaluation section of this grant? If so, are they eligible to bid on this opportunity?

   Answer: No evaluator assisted in the grant writing process

6. **Question:** This will be the third round of GEAR UP funding. In what ways does this build on and advance work established through Grants 1 and 2.

   Answer: This is a separate grant.

7. **Question:** In what ways are Grant 3 activities similar or different to the previous Grants, and what motivated those changes?

   Answer: There are some similarities based on effective practice garnered from the previous grant work and changes that were motivated from best practices and services that may have not yielded the results we desired.

8. **Question:** Section 3.1 indicated that approximately 17,195 students will participate at 50 schools in 11 counties. Approximately how many teachers or educators will be involved?

   Answer: Our last grant, which served a similar number of students and schools, had approximately 3,200 educators participating.

9. **Question:** Relative to section 3.4, how many professional development opportunities will be made available to educators? How many educators are expected to be involved in this effort?

   Answer: PD is a component of the grant, all educators in each of the schools served will have some opportunity to participate in limited service, but those who directly serve the cohort and priority groups will have PD opportunities. School level staff will participate in approximately 5-6 PD meetings a year. Please see Question 8 for the number of educators expected to participate.

10. **Question:** From Section 3.3: In what ways are the full-time commission employees/ Regional Program Directors at the three college partner sites intended to be involved in evaluative activities?

    Answer: Oversight, administrative, and participation. Staff will also be directly involved in creating and delivering certain activities in addition to site level site coordinators.

11. **Question:** Table 4.3.2 lists various data collection sources. Can clarity be provided around the following sources?

    o Belonging Survey
    o Services
    o Student Voice Data

    Answer:

    o Belonging Survey – the instrument created by Borman, et.al. contains a short survey in addition to the open-ended response prompts.
    o Services – this is student, parent, and educator data on the total number of activities, types of activities and length of time each of the participants engaged in WVGU services. These

will be entered by WVGU staff into our data warehouse, that can be shared with the evaluator.

o Student Voice Data – This will be the data obtained through the evaluation of the HEROs program and other student voice initiatives. We expect that some, if not all, of the HERO evaluation data collection will be done in-person by the evaluator, and that these results can be coupled with quantitative and qualitative data obtained from other student voice initiatives that the evaluator may or may not be participating in.

12. **Question:** Will the March 1 benchmarking date be an annual occurrence? Are updated numbers to be consistently provided by that date each year?

Answer: The benchmark survey data collection will be later in the school year given that it is the first year of the grant. For that initial round of surveying, we'd like results to be provided by August 2022. We expect that the annual survey data collection to occur other years late in the fall semester through early in the spring semester, with results provided in the summer.

Regarding Table 4.5, Student and Parent Survey Schedule (Questions 13-16 below)

13. **Question:** Please confirm that students from the classes of 2023 and 2025, and their parents, will not be included in any evaluator-led surveys or data collection activity.

Answer: This is correct.

14. **Question:** The class of 2026 appears to be serving as a consistent retrospective baseline for comparative purposes. Is it fair to assume a similar sample of 2500-2750 students in this population?

Answer: Yes; we expect the year-over-year class sizes for each school to remain fairly consistent.

15. **Question:** What is the anticipated sample for parents per each cohort? Is it fair to assume a 1:1 ratio?

Answer: It's fair to assume a 1:1 ratio for cohort students and parents. For response rate purposes, our target parent sample is 50% versus 80% for students.

16. **Question:** Are parents of 12th grade priority students also to be included in surveying activities?

Answer: The class of 2026 is a priority group and the students' parents will be surveyed as part of the retrospective comparison. The parents of students in other priority groups will not be surveyed.

17. **Question:** Are the business license and vendor registration two different things? Is this all that needs be done for licensing assuming we are in good standing in accordance with any and all state laws and requirements? Can both of these wait until we are chosen or do we need to apply for both prior to submitting our response to the work?

Answer: The business license and vendor registration are different things and are both things that can be completed upon award.

18. **Question:** Does the 40-page limit for the proposal include resumes? Or are resumes considered additional those excluded from the page limit?

    Answer: Per Section 6.2 of the RFP, "Additional material may be presented as exhibits to the main proposal." Any material submitted as exhibits is not included in the 40-page limit.

19. **Question:** *Section 4.6, page 17:* The RFP states, "The successful evaluator will continue to use SCRIBE, developed by Xcalibur." Can you please elaborate on this requirement? How does this affect the scoring of proposals? Which evaluation factors would be affected?

    Answer: SCRIBE is our current data management system and is consistent across the board among most GEAR UP programs. Staff are trained to use this system and it is effective. We require the use of SCRIBE.

20. **Question:** *Section 4.3, page 15:* Regarding the early middle school reading and writing intervention (Borman, et. al, 2019), the RFP states that the intervention will be "administered two times early in middle school, with the first time being at baseline in the seventh grade and then again in the eighth grade." To confirm, is this intervention, and the related study, only being used with Cohort 1 (i.e., 7th graders in Year 1 of the program)?

    Answer: Correct; the reporting of these data will only take place in Year 2 of the grant.

21. **Question:** Can HEPC provide more details regarding the intervention tailored to career-pathways for in-demand jobs? For example:
    a. Who are the target participants, exactly (e.g., Cohort 1 or other GEAR UP students)?
    b. Who is delivering the intervention (e.g., high schools, postsecondary institutions, WV career and technical centers, some combination)?
    c. What is participants' grade level when they receive services?
    d. How long is the intervention (e.g., a one-year program)?
    e. Are the credentials earned through dual credit or some other mechanism?
    f. What are examples of the types of postsecondary credentials participants may be able to earn through the intervention?

    Answer: The full implementation plan for the intervention for career-pathways for in-demand jobs is on going and may be adjusted on a yearly basis depending on intervention success and new partnership opportunities. For example, in 2022 students will have the opportunity to participate in the Impact Challenge initiative.

22. **Question:** *Section 4.3, page 16:* In the description of the quasi-experimental research study to evaluate an intervention tailored to career-pathways for in-demand jobs, the student group cited for the study is cohort students and "postsecondary students in college" and the outcome of interest is earning a college credential.

a. Given that the first group of cohort students would be in their first year of postsecondary education in Year 7 of the grant, what are the time parameters upon which students must earn this credential? At the end of high school? During their first year after high school? If during their first year of college, does HEPC anticipate any challenges with data availability for the study?

Answer: Postsecondary enrollment data for the first cohort's first fall semester in college is expected to be available no later than March 2028. Typically, fall enrollment data are reported by the March following the fall semester and by the August following the Spring semester. However, interest in earning a credential can also be assessed through surveys at any point during the regular survey schedule.

23. **Question:** *Table 4.3.2, page 14:* The table asserts that findings regarding the formative evaluation should be reported in "quarterly and annual reports." Can you please describe the distinction between these two types of reports as well as HEPC's expectations for each?

    Answer: Annual reports should include a synthesis of the research that has been conducted for that year, with conclusions drawn across the body of research. More frequent reports could be in the form of semi-annual reporting that synthesize findings across a subset of research that has been conducted to date, as well as more frequent research briefs that focus on insights from a single research initiative.

24. **Question:** *Pages 1, 18, and 20:* The RFP references an Appendix 3 with list of participating schools and numbers of students. This appendix does not appear to be attached to the RFP

    Answer: The Appendix has been provided.

25. **Question:** WVHEPC has requested an original printed response, 4 copies and a flash/thumb drive. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on working from the office, is it possible to submit our response electronically in lieu of a printed submission?

    Answer: We will allow for an email submission to the following email address: bid.receipt@wvhepc.edu. Information regarding electronic submission is included with this Addendum and added to the RFP as Exhibit E. All email submissions must be received on or before the submission deadline of October 27, 2021, by 3:00pm EDST. **Replacement pages provided.**

26. **Question:** *Section 4.3, page 16:* The section on HEROs/student voice states that the study should provide regular feedback to support continuous improvement "throughout the 7-year grant period." But Table 4.2 notes that HEROs services would only take place during Years 3-6. What is your expectation for capturing the student voice in other years and do you want student voice feedback from non-HEROs students?

    Answer: The evaluator can use Years 1 and 2 to provide baseline data from students before the HEROs initiative begins, while year 7 can provide an opportunity to get students' reflections on the initiative's impact post-participation. As was mentioned in Question 11, results from the

HEROs evaluation can be used in conjunction with data collected from other student voice initiatives in which the evaluator may or may not be participating.

27. **Question:** Are you fully satisfied with the current incumbent (ICF's) work? What could be done differently to improve or change the work?

    Answer: Decline to answer this question.

28. **Question:** What travel will be required? What meetings and/or data collection is expected to be in-person vs. remote?

    Answer: We expect that the evaluator will attend in-person meetings on occasion, present during site coordinator meetings, national conferences in conjunction with WV GEAR UP staff, and visit schools for some events (limited basis), as well as in-person focus groups.

29. **Question:** For the proposal are there any specific formatting requirements (e.g., single spaced, double spaced, font or size requirements)?

    Answer: There are no specific formatting requirements as to spacing and font size, but the submission should be clear and legible.

30. **Question:** To confirm, the 40-page total does not include the appendices, or it should also include appendices?

    Answer: Refer to the Answer to Question #19 above.

31. **Question:** Can all survey data be collected via electronic surveys or is there an expectation that paper surveys will be used with any students/schools?

    Answer: We anticipate the winning proposal to be flexible due to circumstances beyond our control and to ensure we capture responses from all parties (i.e., parents who are not tech savvy and are unable to use a computer). In those instances paper surveys are made available, or upon request from site coordinators due to limited computer access for students.

32. **Question:** Is there a designated IRB we need to utilize for human subjects' protocol approval, or are we expected to work with an independent IRB?

    Answer: There is not a designated IRB, so the evaluator will have to work with an independent/their own IRB.

33. **Question:** Do GEAR UP or HEPC have an agreement with participating colleges for requesting institutional data?

    Answer: Please refer to Question 3 that discusses the multi-party data sharing agreement.

34. **Question:** In the previous grant cycle, did GEAR UP staff or school staff have the responsibility of entering or importing data directly into SCRIBE, or is it expected that the evaluator will be the sole manager of the database?

Answer: GEAR UP staff enter data. The evaluator did not enter any data for our activities or services.

35. **Question:** Approximately how long is the essay the cohort students will write during the social emotional learning intervention?

Answer: The examples used in the prompts for the Borman et. al. assessment are only a sentence long, so the essays should be relatively short. However, there are no parameters listed in the assessment for how long the response should be so they can vary in length.

36. **Question:** In the RFP it mentioned that the annual evaluation should not exceed $255,000. Do you have a specific target budget range each year that you would like to aim for?

Answer: Not to exceed $255,000 is the only stipulation, as well as the guidelines regarding indirect costs are not exceed 8%.

Andrew A. "Drew" Payne III, *Chair*

Sarah Armstrong Tucker, Ph.D., *Chancellor*

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION

1018 Kanawha Boulevard East, Suite 700
Charleston, West Virginia 25301
(303) 558-2101 ● www.wvhepc.edu

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RFP NO. 22079 - REVISED

GEAR UP EVALUATION SERVICES

Table of Contents

Exhibits:

Appendices:

Questions will be received until October 14, 2021 at 5:00PM EDST

Proposals will be received until October 27, 2021 at 3:00PM EDST

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1.6 This RFP may contain mandatory provisions identified by the use of the words "must, will and shall". Failure to comply with a mandatory term in the RFP will result in bid disqualification.

1.7 Proposal Format: Vendor should provide responses in the format listed below:

     1.7.1 Two-Part Submission: Vendors should submit proposals in two distinct parts: Technical and Cost. Technical proposals should not contain any cost information relating to this project. Cost proposals must contain all cost information and should be sealed in a separate envelope from the technical proposal.

     1.7.2 Title Page: The Title Page includes the RFP Number, Addenda Received check boxes, the Bidder's business name, business address and telephone number, a contact name and e-mail address, and includes a signature line and date for the individual authorized to obligate the business. See Exhibit A.

     1.7.3 Table of Contents: Clearly identify the material by section and page number.

     1.7.4 Response Reference: Vendor's response should clearly reference how the information provided applies to the RFP request. Vendor should reference the section of the RFP that the information provided in the bid is referencing.

1.8 Proposal Submission: **Proposals may be emailed to: bid.receipt@wvhepc.edu or** delivered with one (1) original and four (4) copies of the proposal on or before the date required in Section 1.2. The outside of the envelope should be clearly marked with the RFP number, the bid opening date/time, and the Director of Procurement's name and address. **Email submission requirements can be found in Exhibit E.**

         NOTE: ALL PRICES SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN A SEPARATE SEALED ENVELOPE LABELED AS PRICING INFORMATION.

In addition, a digital copy of the proposal should be submitted; the preferred method for submission of the digital copy is by flash/thumb drive which should be included with the original bid.

         PROPOSALS RECEIVED AFTER THE DUE TIME AND DATE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED. IT IS THE BIDDER'S SOLE RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE TIMELY DELIVERY OF THE PROPOSAL.

1.9 Proposals shall remain in effect ninety (90) days from the submission date.

1.10 Conflict of Interest: By signing the proposal, the bidder affirms that it and its' officers, members and employees have no actual or potential conflict of interest, beyond the conflicts disclosed in its' proposal. Bidder will not acquire any interest, direct or indirect, that would conflict or compromise in any manner or degree with the performance of its services under this

VENDOR GUIDELINES FOR BID SUBMISSIONS VIA EMAIL

NOTE: This document is specific to the competitive solicitation processes, where bid submissions must arrive at the closing location on time.

1.   Purpose of These Guidelines

The Commission/Council may post opportunities that allow vendors to submit their bids / proposals / responses (known as submissions) electronically via email. This document is intended to assist vendors in understanding:

- the risks associated with submitting an emailed submission; and

- the pitfalls that should be avoided if emailing a submission.

NOTE: Vendors who deliver submissions via email do so at their own risk; the Commission/ Council does not take any responsibility for any emailed submission that:

- does not arrive on time;

- is rejected; or

- contains corrupted electronic files.

2.   Risks

Although emails are sent every day without incident, there are a number of risks that could occur and delay the receipt of an email. An email submission is deemed to have been received once it arrives in the Commission/Council's Electronic Mail System. Emailed submissions that arrive late will not be considered, regardless of the reason, and vendors <u>will not</u> have the option to resubmit after the closing date and time.

Following are some of the reasons that may delay an email, or cause an email to be rejected by the Commission/Council's email system:

i.   Delays can occur as an email moves from server to server between the sender and the recipient, meaning that the time when an email is received can be later – and sometimes considerably later – than the time when it was sent. The Commission/Council will consider the time that an email was received by the Commission/Council's email system as the official time for any emailed submission.

ii.   The Commission/Council's email system has technical and security limitations on the size and type of files that will be accepted. <u>Emails containing attachments that exceed 30 MB cannot be accepted</u>.

iii.   The Commission/Council's email system has protocols whereby an email may be investigated as potential spam or containing a virus / malware. Such protocols may result in an email being sent to the recipient's inbox late.

iv. The Commission/Council's email system has protocols whereby an email may be investigated as having Personally Identifiable Information (PII). An email determined by the system to contain PII or data of a similar appearance of PII will not be delivered.

v. The Commission/Council's email system is designed to reject any email that is considered spam or that contains a virus or malware. On occasion, an email may be falsely flagged and rejected. Copies of rejected emails are not kept in the email system, and therefore no possibility exists to retrieve an emailed submission that has been rejected.

vi. In addition, it is possible that one or more attachments to an email to become corrupted and therefore inaccessible to the Commission/Council's email system. Vendor will not have the option to resubmit after closing if the attachments cannot be opened. Further, the Commission/Council cannot open any submission prior to closing to confirm whether or not the files have been corrupted.

3. Vendor Guidance for Emailed Submissions

1. Never assume that a solicitation allows for emailed submissions. Emails should only be used as a delivery mechanism when the opportunity expressly allows for it.

2. Never assume which email address is being used for submissions, when emailed submissions are permitted. Carefully read the instructions and ask questions well in advance of closing if the email address for submissions is not clear. Submissions that are emailed to any address other than the one expressly stated for the purpose may be rejected as missing a mandatory requirement of the solicitation.

3. Avoid using generic subject lines in the emailed submissions that do not clearly identify the solicitation name and / or number as well as the vendor organization name. The subject line of the email should be: BID FOR xxxxxxxxx DUE WEDNESDAY xxxxxxxxxx AT 3:00PM. A sample email subject line for an open bid might be: BID FOR 21001 DUE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021 AT 3:00PM.

4. Avoid multiple emails from the same vendor for the same opportunity wherever possible. If multiple emails cannot be avoided (e.g., the collective size of the emails exceeds the maximum size allowed), identify how many emails constitute the full submission and provide clear instructions on how to assemble the submission. Multiple submissions from the same vendor for the same opportunity may result in rejection if these instructions are unclear.

5. Vendors may update, change, or withdraw their submission at any time prior to the closing date and time. If emailing updates or changes, do not submit only the changes that then require collation with the previous submission. Instead, a complete revised package with clear instructions that it replaces the earlier submission should be sent. This will help to avoid any confusion as to what constitutes the complete submission.

6. Avoid emailing submissions in the last 60 minutes that the solicitation is open. Sufficient time should be left prior to closing to ensure that the email was received, and to resubmit before closing if a problem occurs.

7. Do not assume that the email has been received. If a confirmation email is not received shortly after sending the email, contact the named Contact on the solicitation to confirm whether or not their submission was received. In addition, send the emailed submission with a delivery receipt request. If unsure how to send an email with a delivery receipt request, contact the vendor's own system support personnel or search online for instructions specific to the vendor's email system (e.g., Outlook, Gmail, etc.)

8. If the confirmation email is not received, do not resubmit without first contacting the named Contact. Resending a submission should only occur once confirmation is received that the original email was not received, and enough time is left for receipt of the submission prior to the closing date and time.

9. Do not ignore any message from the Commission/Council regarding rejection of an emailed submission. If such a message is received prior to closing, contact the named Contact on the opportunity immediately.

10. If time permits prior to closing, possible remedies for a rejected or missing emailed submission include:
    i. If the collective size of the emailed attachments exceeds <u>30 MB</u>, resubmit it over multiple emails, clearly identify how many emails constitute the full submission and how to collate the files.
    ii. If the emailed submission included zipped or executable files, unzip or remove the executable the files and resubmit over one or more emails (see previous bullet if the files collectively exceed 30 MB).
    iii. Resend the submission from a different email account.
    iv. If permitted in the opportunity, use an alternative method to deliver the submission (e.g., mailed or hand delivered).

 Note: None of these remedies are applicable after the closing date and time.