



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:
English for Employment

Funded by the
City of Boston
Neighborhood Jobs Trust

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

Constance J. Doty
Director of Jobs and Community Services

ISSUE DATE: March 28, 2011 at 43 Hawkins Street, Boston
BIDDERS' CONFERENCE: March 31, 2011, 10:00 a.m. Copley Library
LETTER OF INTENT DUE: April 8, 2011
PROPOSALS DUE: **April 28, 2011**
Responses must be delivered by 4:00 p.m. to
43 Hawkins Street, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA
Inquiries: Todd.Lee.JCS@cityofboston.gov

Introduction

The Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS) is the City of Boston's workforce development agency. Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, JCS administers funding from various sources for the purpose of supporting a broad range of workforce-related services, including job training, adult basic education and youth employment services. One such funding source is the City of Boston's **Neighborhood Jobs Trust**, which distributes linkage funds paid by developers of large-scale commercial construction projects. This Request for Proposals (RFP) solicits proposals for **English for Employment** services to be funded by the Trust. The Trust is issuing this RFP through its administrative agent, the Office of Jobs and Community Services, a division of the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC). JCS will handle all questions concerning this RFP, review all submissions, and prepare recommendations to the trustees. Selected applicants will enter into contracts with EDIC.

Purpose

The Neighborhood Jobs Trust (NJT), through its administrative agency, the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS), requests proposals for English for Employment Services for adults aged 18 and older. Eligible participants are those who need training in English and job readiness in order to find a living wage job, or who need English instruction and preparation to enter a training program which will lead to a family sustaining job. The Trust recognizes the importance of the growing population of immigrants to the city's labor force, and sees English for Employment as one important type of service needed for many New Bostonians to reach income levels allowing self-sufficiency for their families.

Lack of English proficiency has always been a major barrier for immigrant workers to enter and thrive in the English-speaking labor market. Not only has lack of English fluency been a barrier to employment in fairly obvious ways, such as communicating about safety and basic job functions, it has also been a significant obstacle to networking, interviewing, and some of the social skills needed to work well with co-workers and to be considered for advancement. In the knowledge-based economy, the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing and to adapt to often swiftly-changing job roles puts more demands on people's command of English, even in entry-level jobs.

Unfortunately, there is a noticeable gap in the local adult basic education system when it comes to higher level ESOL classes focused on helping people reach employment. The US Department of Education has recently discouraged funding of higher SPL-level ESOL classes. The higher level ESL classes that programs have been able to cobble together from other funding often do not integrate English instruction with the course content of how to find, obtain and retain a job in

the United States. Helping students navigate and prepare for American English-speaking employment is a critical part of helping them transition to living wage jobs which offer medical and other benefits and are covered by labor laws. While “under the table” work is not necessarily always bad work, it leaves the worker vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by her or his employer, with little or no opportunity for redress.

While many of the Boston workers who need English instruction to enter the mainstream workforce lack secondary education and marketable skills, there are a significant minority who are well-educated in their native language and/or have significant and even advanced technical and professional skills. We are interested in services for these kinds of workers as well. Applicants should identify a specific target population, illustrating the particular service needs for the individual to find employment and the organization’s successes in providing English and employment readiness services.

In the current economic downturn, the bar for English proficiency has been raised even higher. Not only are employees expected to use English for the basic functions and communications considered essential in the past, they now also need to multi-task, be literate in technology, communicate with people with higher levels of education and compete with some of those people for entry level jobs.

This RFP is an attempt to meet a small portion of the higher level ESL service need, and to assist some limited English proficiency workers compete for English-speaking jobs at a living wage. While the trustees have opinions about what factors lead to successful English for Employment programs, we respect providers’ knowledge of their target client populations and their experience from practice. We want you to make your best case that: 1) the target population which you have identified will come to your training and attain successful outcomes; and 2) your EFE program will enable program participants to enter occupational skills training resulting in a living wage job or obtain such a job immediately after completing EFE. **This RFP asks the applicant to make the case that your program will allow the targeted participants to be able to enter another level of employment opportunity and self-sufficiency in order to be competitive in the primarily English-speaking job market.**

Definition of EFE

For the purposes of this RFP, English for Employment (EFE) is defined as either 1) English language instruction combined with job readiness and job placement assistance, or 2) English language instruction combined with job readiness instruction and preparation for enrollment into a skills training program with the goal of full-time, permanent employment.

Eligible participants are **Boston residents** who:

- Need English language development and additional skills in order to obtain a family-sustaining wage or to enter a skills training program which would enable them to secure a living wage job
- Are 18 years of age or older
- Are U.S. Citizens or authorized to work in the United States
- Fall below HUD low /moderate income levels
- Are looking for full-time, permanent employment upon completion of their EFE or skills training, and
- Pre-test at an SPL Level of 5 or greater

Eligible Applicants

Any non-profit or for-profit organization which can demonstrate past performance and current capacity to provide effective ESOL and prepare students for a living-wage job or enrollment in a training course leading directly to a living wage job.

Program Design Requirements

- 1. Programs should be intensive, totaling a minimum of 9 hours of instruction per week for participants working 30 hours or more; at least 20 hours per week for the unemployed.** Research indicates that program intensity (the number of hours of instruction per a specific amount of time) is a significant factor in success. While this has to be balanced with the availability of students, we think 9 hours is a minimal level to see significant educational gains within a year. Twenty hours per week is the minimum time necessary for Massachusetts Section 30 approval, which we strongly encourage for any program targeting participants collecting UI benefits.
- 2. Average total instructional hours of at least 200 hours per participant.** Duration of instruction (total number of participant hours) has also been found to have significant impact on student progress in adult education.
- 3. Programs should prepare students for a wide variety of occupations and/or training programs across industries and sectors.** While we know that programs

designed to prepare participants for specific career tracks can be successful, we also have experienced programs with too narrow a focus struggling to find participants who had the interest and/or required skills and education to be a match with their specific targeted jobs. Given the limited funds available, proposed programs should prepare participants for a broad range of occupations and industry sectors or make a convincing case they can adequately outreach to a population which would fit well with EFE training, and that your program would result in job or training placement.

- 4. Programs must have capacity to coach students in career planning, revisit the plan with them during the EFE training, and track their progress once they are placed in a job or training program.** This process of developing career plans includes helping the student understand what career goals are desirable and reachable, integrating the initial assessment with specific steps during the training to help the student persist in education and develop concrete skills to enable the participant to complete EFE and be job or training-ready. Vendor accountability for participants is not concluded until the person either has found a living wage job or has been enrolled in job training which will help them attain a living wage job with a career future. Even after that point, programs must verify that the client has maintained their employment or is still enrolled in their skills training for at least 60 days following placement. Staffing, curriculum and all other aspects of the program should reflect this assistance in developing the career goals and the distinct steps which together make up the customer's career path.
- 5. Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to perform administrative responsibilities including: maintaining records of participant eligibility, attendance and progress; managing a participant tracking system in compliance with the MOSES management information system; and submitting program reports and invoices at regular intervals.**

Program designs should develop technological literacy. Innovative models are encouraged. Understanding of basic technology concepts and competencies such as how to use a personal computer, how to navigate and use tools on the internet, how to fill out an online application and how to conduct a search with search engines have become part of basic education and are necessary skills to access and keep family-sustaining jobs. Use of distance learning through personal computers, mobile phones, podcasts and other devices is encouraged as a way to familiarize students with technology and to increase intensity while allowing more flexibility for students.

Funding Cycle

Funding is for one year, with an anticipated program start date of 7/1/2011. However, we will accept program proposals with start dates later than 7/1/2011.

Performance Measures

Funded programs will be expected to have 70% of enrolled students achieve either placement in a living wage job and/or enrollment in an occupational training leading to a living wage job within 12 months of the beginning of the program. Students should achieve advances of at least one full SPL level from pre-testing to their exit from EFE.

Contracts will be performance based. Programs will be paid based upon their enrollment of students and upon their placement of students into jobs or training programs.

Evaluative Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following categories of responses. The number of possible points for each category is noted. (Points are meant as a tool for grant writers and reviewers; they do not dictate which programs are funded.) The narrative of your proposal should include the following sections, in this order:

- a. **Target Population (10):** Applicants should describe the target population for their proposed program. Explain the main assets and needs of this population and how EFE services can help them reach their employment goals.
- b. **Experience (20):** Outline your experience working with the target population. Describe your experience providing English for Speakers of Other Languages and workforce development training and job placement. Please list the ESOL, job training and integrated basic education/skills training programs you have offered within the last five years and the related job placements and other positive outcome data that is available.
- c. **Program Design (35):**

There is not one perfect program design which will fit any and all students' needs and their particular circumstances. However, through our experiences with English for Employment programs, ESOL and job skills training, we have found the following components to be key elements of successful programs.

I. Access (recruitment, intake, assessment, scheduling, entry points and re-entry points into services)

Describe how you will locate and attract students to enroll in your program and how you will assess them and decide if they are appropriate for the program. Describe what tools you will use to assess students, when assessment will occur, and what methods you will use to assess learners' progress. Outline scheduling and entry processes. Specify what the entrance requirements are for your proposed EFE program.

II. Syllabus and Schedule

Please attach a 1 to 2 page syllabus and a weekly schedule showing class times and summarizing the course content for one week. If weekly schedules change during the class cycle, include other summaries to illustrate those weeks.

III. Integration and contextualization of work or training readiness and career planning into ESOL instruction

Explain how you will improve the English proficiency and job or training readiness skills of your students. What educational approach and activities do you plan? How will the ESOL and job or training readiness activities be integrated/coordinated to make a total curriculum and training? Will ESOL instruction be contextualized to complement work readiness instruction? Do you have a curriculum for EFE currently (please attach outline and/or examples) or if not how do you plan to develop it?

IV Technology Literacy

How will teachers use technology in instruction? What basic technological skills and competencies will students learn? Will the class include distance or blended learning, and if so with what goals and how?

V. Case management/supportive services

Summarize how students will obtain academic and career planning counseling. Will other supportive services be available, and if so, how will they be delivered? How will your program address retention issues? What

specific staff are responsible for these functions and what referral resources are available to students directly?

VI. Job placement or next step facilitation

What are your outcome goals for participants in this program? Describe and explain assessment processes to help identify next steps with the student. For job-seeking students, how will they receive assistance locating job openings? How will the organization assist them in applying for and securing jobs? Which staff will provide job search and job placement assistance? Who will assist students seeking further education and training and what services will be available to them? How will you assist students planning to go on to training or higher education: 1)navigate the process of applying; 2)understand the culture and expectations in their new school, and 3) persist in their education? How will you follow up with participants once they have obtained a job or entered training?

VI. Administration and Documentation

How will the program components and staff be coordinated? Who will be the main contact with JCS? Student progress and outcomes must be documented and organized. How will this be done, and by whom? Who will be responsible for data entry and reporting?

d. Staffing (10):

Include job descriptions for each staff position for the project. Include copies of the resumes of staff in those positions or projected to be in those positions if your proposal is funded. Please indicate which positions are currently filled and which are not. What opportunities do staff have for curriculum development, class preparation, and peer-to-peer sharing and professional development?

e. Partnerships (10):

Describe the key partnerships you have in place and those you are planning. – especially partnerships with employers or training providers. Why are these partnerships important to the success of the program? With what specific aspects of the program will partners assist? Please attach any Memoranda of Agreement or other written documents specifying the terms of your partnerships and the roles and activities of partners.

f. Sustainability (5):

Describe how the program or elements of the program will continue after the end of this grant, if no other funds are available. If refunding is available, how would you see continuing or changing the program from your proposed design for Year 1?

g. Budget (10):

Programs will be evaluated on cost reasonableness and the appropriateness of usage of funds to fulfill the program's goals, as well as the completeness of budget and budget narrative. Program match is not mandatory but will be viewed favorably in evaluating this section.

Funding Availability and Award(s)

The trust has allocated \$200,000 total for this Request for Proposals. The exact number of awards and their amounts will depend on the overall number and quality of proposals and the extent to which they meet the needs of Boston residents. While ongoing funding for EFE programs cannot be guaranteed, the Trust recognizes EFE services as meeting a need we will have in the city of Boston for many years to come.

Application Process

RFP release: The RFP will be available at 12 noon 43 Hawkins Street, 3rd Floor on March 28, , 2011. It will also be available online at www.bostonjcs.org.

Bidders Conference The Bidders Conference for questions and clarifications regarding the RFP will be held on March 31, 2011 at the Rabb Lecture Hall, Copley Library, 700 Boylston Street at 10 AM. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to attend

Letter of intent

A letter of intent is required by Friday, April 8, 2011 (See attached form)

Proposals should include all required attachments, signed where applicable by a person authorized to sign for your organization. The narrative portion of the proposal must be no longer than 10 single-sided pages, single spaced, size 12 font. Include the original (and pages with original signatures) in a document marked "original", along with 4 complete copies of the original. Required and non-required attachments such as syllabi, schedules, staff resumes, etc. do not count toward the page total of the narrative.

Proposals are due on Monday, April 28 at 4 PM on level 3B, 43 Hawkins Street. We strongly urge hand delivery. We are not responsible for proposals left elsewhere in the building or for delays whether caused by traffic or courier service error, etc. We require hard copies only – faxed proposals and electronic proposals will not be accepted.

Contact

All inquiries regarding this RFP should be directed to Todd Lee at Todd.Lee.JCS@CityofBoston.gov.

LETTER OF INTENT TO BID
NJT ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYMENT (EFE) TRAINING
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Letter of Intent due April 8, 2011

This is to notify the Mayor’s Office of Jobs and Community Services the following organization intends to submit a proposal in response to the NJT Job Training RFP.
(Should you subsequently decide not to submit, please let us know.)

Lead Organization: _____

Address: _____

Contact/Title: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Name of program: _____

Focus of program: (job outcome, training outcome or
both) _____

Anticipated Employer, Training Provider or other partner(s):

Signature/Title: Lead Organization _____ Date _____

Please address correspondence to:

Cindy Chow
Jobs and Community Services
Planning and Policy Development – 3B
43 Hawkins Street
Boston, MA 02114

Fax: (617) 918-5227
Email: cindy.chow.jcs@cityofboston.gov

Cover Sheet for English for Employment Proposal

Name of Organization: _____

Name of Program: _____

Address:

Contact Name: _____

Email for contact: _____

Telephone number for contact: _____

Summary Description of Program

Target Population:

Primary Outcome Target: Employment Job Training Enrollment Both

Enrollment Goal: _____

Outcome Goals: (Provide target numbers):

Employment: _____

Job Training Enrollment _____

Certification or credit (if applicable) _____

Funding Request: \$ _____

Signature by Person Authorized to Sign for Organization:

Print Name _____

Signature _____