

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

Alabama Industrial Development Training

RFP Number: 2024-6

Issue Date: 1/17/24

Deadline for Questions and Answers: 2/8/24

Due Date: 2/14/24

1. Purpose

Alabama Industrial Development Training (“AIDT”) solicits proposals from qualified professional responders (“Responder”) interested in providing certain research, policy, and professional services for the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways (ACCCP) and the Alabama Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency (ACCQT).

This Request for Proposals (“RFP”) is issued in accordance with the requirements of Section 41-16-72(4), Code of Alabama (1975). This RFP is not an offer to contract but seeks the submission of proposals from qualified, professional responder that may form the basis for negotiation of marketing and administrative support functions.

2. Background

a. Alabama Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency (ACCQT)

The Alabama Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency (ACCQT) was created by Act 2023-365 to develop an annual list of valuable credentials, known as the Compendium of Valuable Credentials, that are aligned to in-demand occupations in Alabama beginning in June 2024. The work of the ACCQT is powered by the Alabama Credential Registry, one of the three elements of the Alabama Talent Triad, which is designed to provide the means to register and evaluate all degree and non-degree credentials in Alabama against the ACCCP’s non-degree credential quality and transparency criteria. Alabama Act 2023-365 codified the ACCQT as a committee of the Alabama Workforce Council to implement the non-degree credential quality and transparency processes and to provide information to the public on quality and the linkage to in-demand jobs for the thousands of non-degree credentials available in Alabama.

b. The Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways (ACCCP)

The ACCCP is a public-private non-degree credential quality-assurance entity, which was codified by Act 2019-506. The ACCCP is tasked with a two-fold mission: (1) to identify Alabama’s regional and statewide in-demand occupations and (2) to identify competency models and career pathways linked to those in-demand occupations. The ACCCP uses a process called the five-star rubric to create the list of in-demand occupations. Connecting the competencies that makeup the “DNA” of in-demand jobs allows for the development of occupational competency models and dynamic career pathways that are based on the connection between skills across jobs rather than static career pathways that assume a linear progression of jobs.

c. Alabama Credential Registry

The Alabama Credential Registry is the education and training focused leg of the Alabama Talent Triad. Credential providers statewide and nationwide are encouraged to submit their credentials

to the registry as a resource for college and career exploration. In conjunction with the Skills-Based Job Description Generator and Learning and Employment Record, the Credential Registry allows competencies to be linked to credentials and interoperate with hiring and application processes. The Alabama Credential Registry will create a home for Alabamians to view credentials and the ACCQT's recommendations on valuable credentials.

Minimum Qualifications

In order for a proposal to be considered, the Responder must include documented proof that the following minimum qualifications are met. In addition, the Responder has a continuing obligation to disclose information throughout the RFP process should any qualifications or situations change that might render the Responder an unqualified candidate.

- If selected, the Responder will comply with all state regulations to conduct business in the State of Alabama and will register with the Secretary of State, if applicable.
- The Responder and its personnel have all authorizations, permits, licenses, and certifications as may be required under federal, state, or local law to perform the services specified in this RFP at the time it submits a response to this RFP.
- The Responder is familiar with the competency-based education, skills-based hiring, non-degree credential quality and transparency, and linked data standards.
- The Responder is familiar with Alabama Act 2019-506 and Alabama Act 2023-365.
- The Responder is experienced in working with bodies of diverse membership to engage stakeholders and convene committees toward the development of deliverables.
- The Responder is experienced in empirical and methodological workforce and education research.
- The Responder is committed to complying with established timelines and working closely and cooperatively with the Alabama Workforce Council, the Office of Education and Workforce Statistics (OEWS), ACCCP, and ACCQT to implement and enhance the project.
- The Responder has a company policy and practice of equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination based on age, race, creed, and gender.
- If applicable, the Responder will maintain sufficient procedures and capabilities to ensure the timely and accurate backup and full recovery for all servers and other data storage systems related to the project.
- If selected, the Responder will maintain commercially reasonable insurance policies to cover negligent acts or omissions that may arise in its performance of the services discussed in this RFP.
- If selected, the Responder will be in compliance with Section 9(b) of Act 2011-535, *The Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act*.

3. Scope of Services

1) ACCCP Product Development

a) Assist in ACCCP Roles and Responsibilities

- i) Vendor shall develop competency models for occupations selected for

inclusion on the regional and statewide lists of in-demand occupations. Vendor shall use competency data provided by the Office of Education and Workforce Statistics (OEWS) as well as original research.

- ii) Vendor shall develop dynamic career pathways based on the competency connections between in-demand occupations. Vendor may use linked data or any other method of connecting occupations via competencies.

2) ACCQT Product Development

a) Develop ACCQT Evaluation Workflow

- i) The ACCQT will review credentials submitted to the Alabama Credential Registry which have been evaluated against a non-degree credential quality assurance process. The chosen vendor shall assist the OEWS in preliminary evaluation of these credentials. The vendor shall work with OEWS to provide a rubric, score, and recommendation of whether the credential should be included on the Compendium of Valuable Credentials to the ACCQT. Committee members will review each score before the meeting and vote whether to confirm each recommendation during the meeting.

b) Assist in ACCQT Roles and Responsibilities

- i) The vendor shall develop the annual Compendium of Valuable Credentials that are aligned with in-demand occupations for each industry in Alabama, after the ACCQT workflow is complete.
- ii) The vendor shall provide the finished list of credentials to OEWS to make publicly available, so that Alabama citizens and lawmakers know what the Committee identifies as the best pathways to in-demand careers.

c) Expectations of ACCCP and ACCQT Support Professional

- i) Vendor shall facilitate four ACCCP meetings and four ACCQT meetings per year. Assisting OEWS with developing draft competency models, draft dynamic career pathways, and materials for the creation of the Compendium of Valuable Credentials.
- ii) Vendor shall maintain rosters, host meetings, provide materials and publish schedules for meetings in advance for each committee.

3) Revision of the Alabama Competency Model Structure

a) Competency Model Tiers 1-3

- i) The vendor shall evaluate the current state of the Alabama competency model, and the content and form of the competencies in Tiers 1, 2, and 3, which consist of Personal effectiveness, Workplace, and Academic Competencies. OEWS recognizes the need for simplicity in the competency model structure. OEWS is preparing to simplify the structure of the competency models from an eight-tier model into a four-tiered model will form the basis for the simplification into a ready to work level one, a sector specific level two, an occupational specific level three, and a level four that consists of the credentials that are linked to the occupation.

The ACCCP has developed the Alabama Competency Ontology, which is a system for coding organizing, comparing, and recognizing the necessary knowledge, skills,

behaviors, and context behind each individual competency that composes an occupation. The Alabama Occupational Ontology includes an eight-tiered system for classifying competencies based on the how competencies relate to occupations. Through the Alabama Competency Ontology, each competency can be coded, organized, and mapped to occupations and credentials so competencies can be transcribed and transacted as the unit of exchange in the labor market. The eight tiers are: (1) ready-to-work personal effectiveness competencies; (2) ready-to-work academic competencies; (3) ready-to-work workplace competencies; (4) ready-to-work cluster/industry specific competencies; (5) career pathway-specific competencies; (6) occupation-specific competencies; (7) occupation-specific credentials and requirements; and (8) management competencies.

The ACCCP is embarking on a project to reorganize and simplify the Alabama Occupational Ontology to make it easier to operationalize as means of developing skills-based job descriptions used in the Alabama Talent Triad and for identifying the competencies related to course outcomes and other features of time- and credit-based education and training programs. Tiers one, two, and three will be recalibrated and normed to form a new foundational tier. Tier four will become the sector-specific tier. Tiers five and six will be recalibrated and normed to form the occupation-specific tier. Tier seven will become the demonstration of credentials tier. Tier eight will be eliminated. A working group consisting of Office of Education and Workforce Statistics (OEWS) staff and the ACCCP representatives on the ACCQT will lead the work of reorganizing the Alabama Occupational Ontology with a goal of releasing the revised ontology in June 2024. The general purpose for reorganizing the Alabama Occupational Ontology is to simplify the inherent complexity of each competency model. Individuals operationalizing competency models have noticed arbitrary distinctions between similar competencies in different tiers. This effort seeks to collapse boundaries between tiers and more naturally group knowledge, skills, and intellectual behaviors.

Proposal Required Information

Proposals should be as thorough and detailed as possible so that the Responder's capabilities to provide the required services can be properly evaluated.

To be considered, proposal responses to this RFP must include:

1. Brief transmittal letter;
2. Exhibit A: Proposal;
3. Exhibit B: Minimum Qualifications (Reference Item #3 of this document);
4. Exhibit C: Cost Proposal based on Scope of Services (Reference Item #4 of this document);
5. Exhibit D: Vendor Disclosure Statement;
6. Exhibit E: Beason-Hammon Affidavit (must be submitted prior to award of contract); and
7. Other required documentation, as requested by AIDT during the course of the solicitation process.

4. Submission of Proposals

Issuing Office:

Alabama Industrial Development Training
One Technology Court
Montgomery, AL 36116

Submission Deadline: It is the responsibility of the Responder to ensure that one printed copy of its proposal is delivered to and received by AIDT at the above address in a sealed envelope on or before 4:00 p.m. on February 14, 2024. Responders should additionally provide two (2) electronic versions of their response on a USB jump or flash drive. The electronic data must be an exact duplicate of the written version. AIDT will not consider proposals received after the date and time specified herein. AIDT assumes no responsibility for late delivery by the U.S. Mail, the State's Central Mail Facility, a commercial courier service, or any other method of delivery selected by the Responder. RFPs will be publicly opened beginning at 4:01 p.m. CST and prepared for distribution to the committee; however, no opinions, decisions or judgments will be rendered at that time regarding response content. Other than questions and answers (see next item), vendors should not contact the AIDT Purchasing Agent for updates on the review process.

Questions and Inquiries: The sole point of contact for purposes of this RFP is Tammy Wilkinson. **Any questions or inquiries should be in writing and emailed to nathaniel.rankin@commerce.alabama.gov.** All written questions should be submitted **by 4:00 p.m. on February 8, 2024.** Written responses to written questions and inquiries will be posted on AIDT's website, <https://www.aidt.edu/>. Questions will not be answered orally or in person. Any oral communications will be considered unofficial and nonbinding.

Rejection of All Proposals: AIDT reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and/or to solicit additional proposals if that is determined to be fiscally advantageous to AIDT or is otherwise determined to be in the best interests of AIDT.

5. Evaluation and Selection

AIDT will post the RFP on the Alabama Department of Finance Comptroller's website at <http://www.comptroller.alabama.gov>. Interested parties may monitor the progress and status of this RFP process on such database.

All proposals timely received will be reviewed and evaluated by AIDT in consultation with the Alabama Workforce Council. After the review and evaluation of the proposals, AIDT and the Alabama Workforce Council may conduct interviews. All interviews will be scheduled virtually. Finalists chosen for interviews, if any, will be notified. AIDT reserves the right to request a best and final offer for fees from finalists.

Qualifications to be considered for evaluation include the overall abilities, capabilities, and experience of the Responder to develop the brand and the web portal. On the advice of the Alabama Workforce Council, AIDT will select the Responder it determines, to be fully qualified and best suited among those submitting proposals to best meet the needs specified in this RFP.

Upon identification of the selected Responder, if any, AIDT may initiate negotiations for contract terms and conditions.

6. Efforts to Influence Selection Process Prohibited

The integrity of the RFP process is of primary importance and will not be compromised. Any written or oral communications beyond the RFP response made by Responders, or others on their behalf, whether paid or unpaid, to influence the selection process, from the time the RFP is issued through its conclusion, made directly or indirectly to AIDT staff (other than the designated contact), will be grounds for immediate elimination from the selection process.

7. Agreement

All duties of the Responder will be set forth in an Agreement to be entered into between the selected Responder and AIDT and its partners. The agreement will be for a period of up to 12 months with no extension option. The agreement will incorporate the requirements of the RFP and the proposal as negotiated.

AIDT reserves the right to terminate the agreement with thirty days' notice if the terms of the proposal and/or contract are violated.

Termination of the contract by Responder without cause can only occur with at least one hundred and twenty (120) days' notice prior to the termination of the contract.

Responder shall within two months prior to the end of the contract term provide AIDT with copy of any and all materials, in any form including administrator access to websites and social media accounts, produced under the contract.

State law prohibits AIDT from agreeing to (1) indemnify the Responder, (2) waive the right for jury trial, (3) grant a security interest, or (4) agree to binding arbitration. Additionally, it is mandatory that Alabama laws apply to the performance of the contract and that jurisdiction and venue be in Montgomery, Alabama.

8. Public Information

All proposals received and subsequent communications, contracts, reports, and other records developed during the course of the relationship, except as may specifically be exempted, will be subject to the Alabama Open Records Act, Section 36-12-40, Code of Alabama (1975), and may be subject to public disclosure upon request. The Open Records Act is remedial and should therefore be liberally construed in favor of the public. The Alabama Trade Secrets Act is codified in Sections 8-27-1 through 8-27-6, Code of Alabama (1975). Responders are cautioned to be familiar with these statutes. The burden is on the one asserting the trade secret to show that the information sought to be protected meets the definition of a "trade secret" as defined in such act.

Any RFP proposal submitted that contains confidential, trade secrets or proprietary commercial information must be conspicuously marked on the outside as containing confidential information, and each page upon which confidential information appears must be conspicuously marked as such. Identification of the entire bid proposal as confidential is not acceptable unless the responder enumerates the specific grounds or applicable laws that support treatment of the entire material as protected from disclosure according to the foregoing statutes or other applicable Alabama law.

The owner of the confidential information shall indemnify and hold the State of Alabama, AIDT and their respective staffs harmless from all costs or expenses, including but not limited to attorney fees and expenses related to litigation, concerning disclosure of said information and documents.

Exhibit A PROPOSAL

Part I. Qualifications

1. Provide a description of the responder, including company overview, history and qualifications of staff that would be assigned to this project. Note any changes pending in this description.
2. Provide working links to work and corresponding references of the responder served in the last two years comparable to the scope of this RFP.
3. Provide a well-defined scope of services available and a demonstrated ability to meet the requirements of this RFP.
4. Provide a proposed process for working with the Alabama Workforce Council and the OEWS to support the workflow and deliverables of the ACCCP and the ACCQT.
5. Provide a complete listing of fees, including all optional services that may be offered.
6. Provide information on all “related” or “affiliated” responders that will assist in providing the services described in this RFP.
7. Provide details of any claims, disputes, litigation, or other legal proceedings where the responder is involved, or has been involved in the three preceding years, with the State of Alabama or any of its agencies.
8. Describe any activities in which the responder is engaged which may constitute a conflict of interest.
9. Describe the responder’s general backup procedures in the event of an in-house system failure or a material business disruption (expected to impact operations for more than 8 hours).
10. Describe factors or reasons why AIDT and the Alabama Workforce Council should consider the responder more favorably than its competitors.

Part II. Other

1. Discuss any creative approaches to services or alternative suggestions that have not been specifically requested or would enhance efficiency and/or reduce costs.
2. How the responder will provide research support that meets the needs of the ACCCP and the ACCQT.
3. Describe the responder’s ability to create research deliverables in support of the ACCCP and the ACCQT.
4. Discuss the responder’s prior experience in providing research support for similar initiatives.

Exhibit B

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

In order for your proposal to be considered, the Responder must include documented proof that the following minimum qualifications are met. In addition, the Responder has a continuing obligation to disclose information throughout the RFP process should any qualifications or situations change that might render the Responder an unqualified candidate.

1. If selected, the Responder will comply with all state regulations to conduct business in the State of Alabama and will register with the Secretary of State, if applicable.
 Yes No

2. The Responder and its personnel have all authorizations, permits, licenses, and certifications as may be required under federal, state, or local law to perform the services specified in this RFP at the time it submits a response to this RFP.
 Yes No

3. The Responder is committed to being a neutral party for workforce and human services-focused policy support.
 Yes No

4. The Responder is committed to work closely and cooperatively with AIDT and the Alabama Workforce Council to facilitate the implementation of any enhancements or modifications required by the AIDT and the Alabama Workforce Council.
 Yes No

5. The Responder has a company policy and practice of equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination based on age, race, creed, and gender.
 Yes No

6. If selected, the Responder will carry errors and omissions insurance or a comparable instrument to cover the responder's negligent acts or omissions.
 Yes No

7. If selected, the Responder will be in compliance with Section 9(b) of Act 2011-535, *The Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act*.
 Yes No

Exhibit C
COST PROPOSAL

1. Provide a detailed and itemized cost proposal to complete this project. All costs must be included.
2. AIDT will reimburse for services provided. Documentation will be required for reimbursement. Please provide what annual compensation per year for one would be, and please list in detail compensation for any other services beyond such scope.
3. The total cost for services and expenditures under this agreement shall not exceed \$200,000. Payment for charges over this amount will not be made.

AIDT is exempt by law from payment of state or local sales taxes; do not include such taxes in the Cost Proposal.

Exhibit D

VENDOR DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

All proposals in response to this RFP must include a completed Vendor Disclosure Statement, as required by Section 41-16-80, *et seq.*, Code of Alabama (1975). Copies of the Vendor Disclosure Statement and related information may be downloaded from the Alabama Attorney General's website at <http://www.ago.state.al.us/Page-Vendor-Disclosure-Statement-Information-and-Instructions>.

Exhibit E

BEASON-HAMMON AFFIDAVIT

(To be completed as a condition for the award of any contract, grant, or incentive by the State of Alabama, any political subdivision thereof, or any state-funded entity to a business entity or employer that employs one or more employees.)

State of _____

County of _____

Before me, a notary public, personally appeared _____ (print name) who, being duly sworn, says as follows:

As a condition for the award of any contract, grant, or incentive by the State of Alabama, any political subdivision thereof, or any state-funded entity or employer that employs one or more employees, I hereby attest that in my capacity as _____ (state position) for _____ (state business entity/employer/contractor name) that said business entity/employer/contractor shall not knowingly employ, hire for employment, or continue to employ an unauthorized alien.

I further attest that said business entity/employer/contractor is enrolled in the E-Verify program. (ATTACH DOCUMENTATION ESTABLISHING THAT BUSINESS ENTITY/EMPLOYER/CONTRACTOR IS ENROLLED IN THE E-VERIFY PROGRAM).

Signature of Affiant

Sworn to and subscribed before me this ____ day of _____, 2020.

I certify that the affiant is known (or made known) to me to be the identical party he or she claims to be.

Signature and Seal of Notary Public