

**APPLICANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
CONSTRUCTING FUTURES
R-1011-15-8031
Q & A period: September 1, 2009-September 21, 2009**

Final Question and Answer Document

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

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- Q1.** On page 13 of the RFP (Section 3.2, Experience and Capabilities), there are page limits of eight pages each for the Organizational Experience and Staff Experience sections. In addition, there is a 2-page-per-entity limit for each partner's organizational chart. Similarly, on page 14 of the RFP (Section 4.1, Introduction), there is a page limit of 5 pages double-spaced. However, I can't find page limits or spacing requirements for the remainder of the proposal. Could you please advise any page limits and spacing requirements that exist for the remainder of the proposal?
- A1.** **Two other criteria like the ones cited above, involve the title page, which by definition must be a single sheet, and the Budget Narrative, which must be no more than two pages long. (See RFP Section 7.2, Format for Organization of the Proposal.)**

Besides these restrictions and the ones noted in the question, there are no specific page limits or spacing rules. HOWEVER, it is very important to note that excessive length and/or unnecessary verbiage will affect a proposal's chance of success. Section 7.2 of the RFP stipulates that "ODJFS reserves the right not to review submitted appendices which includes information/materials not required in the RFP." RFP Section 8.1 (re: Scoring) notes that "Proposals containing assumptions, ... poor organization, lack of proofreading and unnecessary use of self-promotional claims will be evaluated accordingly."

This provision of 8.1 is also relevant: "Applicants will be evaluated based on the capacity and experience they demonstrate through their proposals, and on the quality of their project designs." One measure both of capacity and design quality is the ability to communicate objectives and plans concisely. The same section of the RFP also provides ODJFS some latitude in judging the overall fitness of a proposal as follows: "The PRT reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, in whole or in part, received in response to this request."

Wednesday, September 16, 2009

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- Q2.** On page 19 of the RFP (Section V, Project Budget), as well as on page 26 of the RFP (proposal format section), it says that the budget narrative can be two pages long. However, on the Proposal Score Sheet (Attachment D), it says the budget narrative should be one page. Which is correct?
- A2.** Pages 19 and 26 of the RFP are correct in stating that the Budget Narrative must be no longer than two pages. There are a couple references to a one-page narrative (in the Score Sheet Phase I Item 5.C, as well as RFP Section 2.1.D.3). But the latter wording is poorly chosen and based on an informal estimate about the average length. The document may in fact be up to two pages long. We apologize for the contradiction.

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- Q3.** Administrative fee: What percent of total direct costs can be charged to cover the administration of the project?
- A3.** The RFP sets no specific limit for administrative expenses. However, it emphasizes - repeatedly - the importance of a responsible use of resources. Relevant provisions of the RFP include the following:
- o Section 1.1 (page 5) -- Proposals submitted in response to this RFP must demonstrate the partnership members' organizational strengths and capacities; [and] administrative preparedness for their respective tasks in quickly launching and operating a pre-apprenticeship program.....
 - o Section 4.2 -- Technical Proposals must demonstrate that ample resources are available to implement [the operating plan] successfully.
 - o Section V. Project Budget -- The applicant needs to plan for an efficient and sustainable use of resources to achieve the goals of this initiative.
 - o Section 6.20 -- Any applicant deemed not responsible, or submitting a proposal deemed not to be responsive to the terms of this RFP, shall not be awarded the resulting grant.
 - o Section 8.1 -- ODJFS will select for funding those proposals that best demonstrate the ability to meet the requirements specified in this RFP. Applicants will be evaluated based on the capacity and experience they demonstrate through their proposals

ODJFS considers the reasonable division of funds between administrative and program spending to be an essential condition of satisfying these provisions. Therefore, the selection of applicants for funding will be affected by whether the budgeted administrative costs are within a normal percentage range for ODJFS-funded training, and whether amounts above that range (if any) are well justified. A good guideline (though again not a specific limit) would be the 10% figure applied to WIA formula-funded programs.

Please note that RFP Section 8.2, Review Process Caveats, stipulates: "ODJFS reserves the right to disqualify any applicant, regardless of the quality of the proposed project, should the Project

Budget indicate to ODJFS unreasonable costs or any other indicator of possible project failure(s) due to financial or fiscal issues. The State may, at its sole discretion, request further information from an applicant in order to clarify any such issues, but ODJFS reserves the right to make the final decision, and may determine that [it is] in the best interests of the program to disqualify an applicant based solely on those issues. [...] Any applicant deemed not responsible, or that submits a proposal deemed not responsive to the terms of the RFP, shall not be awarded a grant under this initiative.”

It is also important to correctly distinguish administrative and program costs. Achieving the right balance may be easier than expected, as certain expenses are often incorrectly assumed to be administrative. For the purpose of Constructing Futures, ODJFS applies a definition based on Section 667.220 of the WIA regulations, which can be viewed on line at: http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2008/apr/qtr/pdf/20cfr667.220.pdf.

- Q4.** Tabs: The RFP does not describe the physical appearance of a "tab". For the first Constructing Futures proposals, our college purchased tabs that could be printed from a computer template. However, buying tabs for 7 proposal sets is costly. Will you accept colored paper, appropriately labeled as tabs and sub-tabs per the RFP, as an acceptable "tabs" format.
- A4.** The term “tabs” refers to divisions that are applied to the proposal as an organization device. ODJFS prefers applicants include tab markers that protrude from the side of the paper so that the evaluation team may more easily review the applications. However, ODJFS will not penalize applicants who submit applications which contain standard-sized colored paper to label the tabs that are defined in the RFP.

September 19, 2009

Beth E. Pirtle-Frazer
Freestyle Consulting

- Q5.** 3.2 Experience and Capabilities, pg 13/31 A. Organizational, B. Staff
Each of these sections requires a narrative not to exceed 8 pages. In other instances, the RFP specifies double-spaced responses. Are these to be double-spaced also or is that to our discretion since resumes and job descriptions must be included within that 8-page limit?
- A5.** **Double-spacing is only required where so specified.**
- Q6.** Section IV. Technical Proposal, pg.14/31
The first deliverable is an Operating Plan. When is this deliverable expected? If a partnership is new, there could be significant planning time associated with the development of an operating plan. Will preference be given to partnerships with developed and implemented Operating Plans?
- A6.** **The deadline to submit an operating plan hinges on the project implementation date. As noted in RFP Section 2.3, this is tentatively estimated as November 23, 2009, but may be sooner or later, depending on the processing time for grant agreements.**

Since project implementation requires the use of an operating plan, an applicant that does not enclose a plan with its proposal must schedule time for ODJFS to review and approve the plan before the implementation date. ODJFS will keep grantees fully and promptly informed of events that affect the time-frame for plan review, including the progress of writing grant agreements and

the number of entities that need to submit plans (affecting in turn the time required to review them).

As stated in Section IV, “the submittal of a satisfactory operating plan will not in itself increase an applicant’s score for addressing the scope of work. However, it is likely to aid in demonstrating organizational capacity, and the success of an application depends greatly on demonstrating a likelihood of quality results for all the listed deliverables.”

Therefore, if an operating plan is not included in the proposal, the applicant needs to demonstrate that it has the know-how and capacity to develop a sound plan in a timely way, with input from the right people, and that it will implement the plan effectively.

Q7. Is there a total page limits for the submitted proposal outside any included Operating Plan?

A7. Please see Answers #1 and #2.

Q8. Will proposal score sheets be available following funding decisions? How do we access those?

A8. Yes. ODJFS will include the applicant’s score sheet with the notification letter on whether or not the applicant was recommended for a grant award.

September 21, 2009

**Allison Motz, Managing Member
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Q9. As a point of clarity, proposals are able to add \$100,000 to their application with the addition of either a registered apprenticeship program OR another workforce investment area, correct?

A9. An applicant may ask for funding above the standard ceiling of \$400,000, based on the participation of multiple partners within the Registered Apprenticeship and/or WIA categories. The amount of this extra funding depends on how many Registered Apprenticeship sponsors and/or WIA areas are represented in the partnership beyond the minimum requirement of one each. The applicant may request additional funds up to \$100,000 for each sponsor besides the lead entity, AND may request extra funds up to \$100,000 for each WIA area beyond the first one,

For instance, an applicant partnership that includes a total of two sponsors and one WIA entity is eligible to request up to \$100,000 extra. A partnership with two sponsors and two WIA areas -- or one sponsor and three areas, etc. -- may request up to \$200,000 above the basic grant ceiling. A partnership may request as much as \$300,000 extra if it includes three sponsors and two WIA areas, or one sponsor and four areas, etc.

Please note that WIA area representation means the inclusion in a partnership of the administrative entity, One-Stop operator, and/or local Workforce Investment Board for one of twenty state-defined WIA jurisdictions. While the involvement of all such entities within an area is encouraged (indeed expected), this will not multiply the amount of funds available for the inclusion of that area.

Also, as stated in RFP Section 1.2, the government assigns every Registered Apprenticeship program a distinct code number. An organization must have an active apprenticeship ID code to be considered a “sponsor” for purposes of the Constructing Futures initiative.

Q10. Per the registration requirements in connection with the previous Constructing Futures, the fiscal agent must submit the letter of intent online; however, if the applicant in the previous Constructing Futures program was NOT the fiscal agent now included, do the programs have to submit another request?

A10. **Yes. The fiscal agent of the applicant partnership is now the entity that must file an expression of interest at the Recovery funds web site at <http://apps.das.ohio.gov/dasoitrecovery/Default.aspx>**

Q11. Does the survey of Registered Apprenticeship sponsors need to be completed prior to the proposal submission or can that be included in the planning work of the proposal partners?

A11. **Section 4.2, Specification of Deliverables, includes two program features -- technical instruction and remedial training -- that must be designed partly on the basis of surveys of Registered Apprenticeship sponsors regarding skill deficits that impede success.**

While a partnership need not complete all the design work before applying, the introduction to Section IV notes that “The technical proposal must describe how the partners will develop [the] operating plan and, as much as possible, how it will be carried out.” So it behooves the applicant to include in its proposal whatever information is necessary to show that these features will have desirable content, will be soundly designed, and will be fully implemented.

Q12. Is it accurate that in total, the proposal package should have 28 tabs and sub-tabs? Do you have any direction for reducing the amount of paper should any one tab not actually fill a full page of paper? Are we able to consolidate tab-sections at all?

A12. **The proposal must include five tabs (i.e., main sections), and may include a sixth for optional attachments or appendices. The tabs must be clearly divided and demarcated. (See Answer #4.) Within each tab, it is acceptable for sub-tabs to occupy or overlap the same pages. However sub-tabs must be titled as such and must be clearly demarcated, whether through bold-print headings, graphic symbols, or other means. Applicants must use their judgment as to what makes for clear demarcation, while remembering that ODJFS will do likewise.**

Q13. Are Memorandums of Understanding signed by each of the partners describing their role and commitment to the project, eligible as opposed to separate letters from each partner?

A13. **RFP Section 3.1.B clearly states that “The application packet must include a separate letter of commitment from each partner organization stating what activities and services it will perform in terms of planning and implementing the program to be funded by this grant.” While the RFP does not specify a format, applicants should note that each partner’s commitment will be distinct to that organization and the sector it represents, and that a standardized Memorandum of Understanding is not assumed to be capable of capturing such distinctions. The purpose of 3.1.B is to elicit commitment, not passive consent. Formats and contents should be planned accordingly.**

Q14. Is there an estimated amount of "planning time" expectations from the State for the partners and the program? Does the State view planning to be completed within one month, three months, six months?

A14. **See Answer #6.**

**Kelly Kupcak
Greater Cincinnati Regional Construction Trades Partnership**

Q15. Can a consortium of registered apprenticeship program sponsors be considered the Lead Entity for reporting and administration or must a single RAP sponsor be identified and serve in this role?

A15. A single Registered Apprenticeship sponsor must be identified as the lead entity. As noted in RFP Section 1.2, a sponsor is represented in the Registered Apprenticeship system by an ID code number. A proposal must provide that number for each sponsor in the applicant partnership.

Applicants should note that a sponsor may encompass more than one organization. For instance, a registered employer association and often a Joint Apprenticeship Committee will include representatives of multiple employers. In that case, the apprenticeship program is classified as having a “group” sponsor, and the program ID code will identify the group as a single entity.

Q16. The RFP indicates that the “Introduction” must be double-spaced and no longer than five (5) pages in length. Should the rest of the proposal be double-spaced as well?

A16. See Answer #5.

Q17. Should the required “list of resources” be submitted in the proposal within the narrative, or in a chart format? Should it be incorporated into the proposal or as an addendum in Section 6?

A17. As noted in Section 4.1, the Technical Proposal must include an Introduction that summarizes, among other elements, the program resources. According to Section 4.2, resources must also be specified in detail for each deliverable. It is assumed that this will occur in the context of lettered sub-tabs under Tab 4. Applicants must decide all matters of format in light of what makes the proposal readable and clarifies its conformity with each requirement of the RFP.

Q18. Does the maximum page length of eight (8) pages for the “Partnership Qualifications” include the organizational charts for partners or just the narrative?

A18. Under Section 3.2.A, organizational charts for partner entities are defined separately from the narrative describing partner experiences. These charts must not be incorporated within the narratives, and they will not be counted toward the eight-page narrative limit.

**THIS CONCLUDES THE QUESTION & ANSWER DOCUMENT
FOR ODJFS RFP#: R-1011-15-8031**