



Opportunity Works:
Sector Driven Internships for Young Adults in Suburban Cook County

RFP: Questions and Answers– Questions received by 4pm on April 26, 2017

Q1: Even though sector focus of program is on IT, TDL, and Manufacturing, How much consideration will be given for healthcare?

A1: As of today, The Partnership has \$1 million in funding from Cook County and 50 percent of that funding must be used for internships and related program activities focused on TDL. In addition to this restriction, Opportunity Works will focus on IT and Manufacturing. The Partnership and the Office of the President of Cook County are emphasizing Manufacturing, TDL, and IT because they are aligned with the Cook County Economic Development Agenda and we expect to see growth in these sectors in the south and western suburbs of Cook County. The Partnership will permit selected respondents to connect a limited number of young people to other high-demand, high-growth sectors targeted by the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, which are: Business and Professional Services, Healthcare, Hospitality/Culinary, Retail, Information Technology (IT), Manufacturing, and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL.) Selected respondents must exhaust all efforts to place participants in internships within IT, TDL or Manufacturing AND receive prior permission from The Partnership before considering other sectors.

Q2: Can Building trades count as high growth, high demand?

A2: The building trades are not an identified high-growth, high-demand sector as currently defined by The Partnership. See A1.

Q3: Are jobs at the airlines considered transportation jobs?

A3: It depends on the specific position. In most cases airline jobs would fall into the TDL sector. Young adults must be exposed to career opportunities in TDL and develop related skills through the internship. The respondent should explain how their program, including the nature of the internship, will accomplish these objectives.

Q4: Would urban gardening project in partnership with for profit work? (i.e. convert vacant lot to garden and have produce for sale in local grocer.)

A4: As stated previously, Opportunity Works is focused on Manufacturing, TDL and IT because of job growth and the potential to connect young adults to careers within these sectors. It is important that participants in Opportunity Works be placed in internships that expose them to local job and career opportunities. Urban gardening does not have a unique North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code; activity may fall under Agriculture (11 different industry codes) or, if the produce is sold at markets or fruit

stands, Retail. Therefore, Urban Gardening does not qualify as an appropriate industry sector for Opportunity Works.

Q5: Do winning proposals have to connect participants to long-term employment options?

A5: Selected respondents will be required to connect participants to one of the following after the internship concludes: an unsubsidized long-term job, a post-secondary education or training program, high school or a high school equivalency program, and/or a workforce development program. At the start of the program, the selected respondent should work with each young person to identify their employment and/or education goals to be attained at the conclusion of the program, as well as their longer-term career goals. While the selected respondent should work to connect all participants to a job, education/training or workforce program, The Partnership will determine the percent of young adults that must achieve one of these outcomes in order for the project to be considered successful.

Q6: What is the maximum an agency should ask for?

A6: Opportunity Works is currently funded for \$1 million dollars. Proposals that request more than this amount will be automatically disqualified. The Partnership and its selected respondents must serve 200 young adults, with 50 percent of internships and activities focused on TDL. Respondents should consider these factors when developing their budget and proposed outcomes.

Q7: Is there an anticipated number of grants to be awarded.

A7: No.

Q8: Are you encouraging collaboration amongst providers?

A8: Yes. The Partnership is seeking proposals that will most effectively address the challenge. If collaboration increases the impact and efficacy of your proposed program, The Partnership encourages it. All partnerships need to be clearly articulated as described in the RFP.

Q9: Will organizations in the southland communities who do not have existing contracts with The Partnership be considered?

A9: Organizations do not need to have an existing contract with The Partnership to be considered for this opportunity.

Q10: What is the earliest time and date to submit?

A10: Respondents can submit their proposal as soon as it is complete. Respondents must follow the proposal submittal and acceptance process outlined in the RFP.

Q11: If our organization wants to be a partner training placement organization for manufacturing, how can we share our information with proposers?

A11: Respondents should establish their own relationships with potential partners. The Partnership will not make connections between respondents..

Q12: Does food sanitation certificate and placement with restaurants and hotels qualify as a trade?

A12: Opportunity Works is not focused on hospitality. Respondents should propose programs that are exclusively or primarily focused on developing experiences within the targeted sectors. See response to Q1 for more detail.

Q13: Does this project provide funding for reentry programs with job training, education, and employment for ex-offenders.

A13: Young adults who are currently involved in the criminal or juvenile justice system or have a history of such involvement (and are unemployed and suburban Cook County residents) automatically qualify for Opportunity Works. The Office of the President of Cook County and The Partnership consider justice-involved young adults as a priority population for Opportunity Works and workforce and training programs in general. Respondents that propose to connect young adults returning to the community or ex-offenders to internships that meet the programmatic criteria outlined in the RFP will be considered for funding.

Q14: Can the programs be longer than seven weeks? i.e. having 25 hour weeks for 8 weeks?

A14: Yes, programs can be longer than seven weeks. Young adults should be engaged in roughly 30 hours per week of activity; 25 hours per week is permissible if the respondent provides clear justification for this decision in their response. The Partnership identified an average cost per participant in the RFP that is based on a seven week, 30 hour per week, \$10- \$12 per hour program structure. Respondents may propose a lower or higher cost per participant. If the respondent proposes a higher cost per participant, they must justify this decision by demonstrating how participant outcomes will be enhanced. The review committee will be focused on program quality and results. Respondents must meet the fiscal and budget requirements outlined in the RFP, even if they propose a higher cost per participant.

Q15: If an organization already receives county grant funds, does that pose a problem for this grant?

A15: No, unless the organization is not in good standing.

Q16: Will there be an opportunity to apply next year since our summer program is already in place?

A16: Opportunity Works is not a traditional summer jobs program. The Office of the President of Cook County and The Partnership are deliberately launching the program in the summer months in recognition of the importance of providing youth and young adults with structured, safe and productive activities during this time. However, Opportunity Works will be ongoing and expanding. President Preckwinkle is committed to funding this at the \$1 million dollar level for the foreseeable future. At this time, The Partnership does not know whether there will be a RFP in 2018. The Partnership will have the option to extend the contracts of selected respondents for two additional years.

Q17: So the service provider applies for the grant but The Partnership will provide the youth through an online application process – how will that work?

A17: The service provider is responsible for recruiting and enrolling youth. The Partnership will create and maintain an online, centralized application that all potential participants must complete. The service provider should assist potential participants in completing the application after they recruit them and conduct an initial screening. Potential participants will have the ability to select the referring service provider through the online application.

The Partnership anticipates that additional partners and entities, such as elected officials, school districts, and community organizations, will refer young adults to the program. The centralized online application will enable The Partnership to direct referring partners to one location and to keep track of referrals. The Partnership will screen these applications for basic eligibility criteria (namely, age) and refer the potential participant to the closest contracted service provider to their home address or to a service provider that focuses on the sector in which they expressed interest. The Partnership expects contracted service providers to follow up with all applicants and to refer those not selected for Opportunity Works to other community resources.

Q18: What if a serious concern comes up after the 28th – is there a fair process to get the concern addressed?

A18: The Partnership will continue to monitor the opportunityworks@workforceboard.org email address after April 28th. If there are significant issues that arise after April 28th, The Partnership will determine whether it is appropriate to respond at that point. .

Q19: What provisions are available to address transportation deficits in south suburbs?

A19: Respondents should identify creative transportation solutions and allocate significant resources for transportation in their submitted program budgets. Please see the fiscal requirements section for additional details.

Q20: Can job shadowing, workplace tours, and career exploration activities count as paid internship for 16-17 year olds?

A20: Yes, potentially, The respondent should propose a program that centers around an internship, which we define as work-based learning with an employer. The internship can take the form of work, job shadowing, on-site training or learning and other activities. If a respondent proposed a program that involved job shadowing, workplace tours and career exploration activities AND the participant developed a strong relationship with a consistent employer that lead to the development of work-based skills, , it could potentially meet the requirements for the internship component of Opportunity Works.

Q21: What do we do with the 16-17 year olds in terms of internships in manufacturing worksites?

A21: Respondents should create internship opportunities for 16 and 17 year old participants. While many employers have concerns around hosting interns who are 17 years old and younger, there are others that do not. Internship opportunities can be created in office environments and non shop-floor environments. Respondents need not confine their employer engagement to one sector.

Q22: Does the agency need to submit audited financial statements?

A22: Yes, if the agency is required by law to have financial statements audited. If not required by law to conduct audits, agencies must submit the most recent year-end financial statements.

Q23: Can a nonprofit partner with a for-profit to apply for the grant.

A: Yes. The respondent must clearly explain all partnerships in the response, as described in the RFP.

Q24: Can the location of the work be in Chicago with suburban participants? (i.e. Participants from Bellwood and Maywood receiving services in an Austin location.)

A: Yes. Respondents can connect participants to internships with businesses based in the city of Chicago, provided that they assist participants with transportation to and from the business. The respondent must identify a suburban location where they will provide non work-based services, such as training and career mentoring, to participants.

Q25: Can RFP response be solely training and access to resources based? (i.e. placement with employers as secondary to foundational skills)

A: Most likely not. Programs must involve an internship experience with an employer in target sectors. The internship may consist primarily of training activities, but it is critical that the training be led by the employer at the worksite.

Q26: Do successful proposals need to include short-term employment vs. solely services and training?

A26: Proposals must include a subsidized work-based internship component to be considered for funding. . The internship may consist primarily of training activities, but it is critical that the training be led by the employer at the worksite.

Q27: If someone turns 25 later this year, are they eligible to participate in the program?

A27: Participants must be between 16 and 24 years of age on the day that they enroll in the program.

Q28: The RFP says: the youth must reside in a suburban community with a poverty rate exceeding 15% or an unemployment rate exceeding 8%. Is it okay if the agency is not situated in this area but we are able to recruit from this area?

A28: Service providers must have, or be able to secure, a service location in suburban Cook County to submit a successful application. Service providers do not have to be located within one of the automatically qualifying communities that meet the poverty and unemployment rates. However, service providers located within these communities may be better situated to recruit and serve the young adults targeted by Opportunity Works.

Please note that living in an automatically qualifying community is just one of the ways that a young adult can be eligible for the program. Unemployed young adults between the ages

of 16-24 can also qualify for the program if they live in an income eligible household in suburban Cook County or face one or more barriers to employment as outlined in the RFP.

Q29: Does the agency need to have an existing WIOA contract?

A29: No, an agency need not have an existing WIOA contract to submit a proposal for Opportunity Works.

Q30: One of the eligibility criteria for the youth is English language learner. Is there an ESL min. or max. level that is defined as English language learner?

A30: There is no minimum or maximum level. For this program, an English language learner is a young adult with limited ability in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending the English language **and** : 1) whose native language is not English, **or** 2) who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language.

Q31: The RFP says: While The Partnership is supporting placement development efforts, respondents are expected to recruit businesses and develop internship opportunities. Respondents must secure slots for 75% of the total number of youth they propose to serve. Is the agency expected to share those employer connections with the Partnership and go through them to cultivate the internship opportunity or can we individually deal with the employers?

A31: Service providers should individually deal with employers. The Partnership will not expect service providers to go through The Partnership to relate to employers or to “transfer” existing employer relationships to The Partnership. However, The Partnership will be actively involved in ensuring that Opportunity Works involves successful employer engagement and quality internship experiences. Selected respondents will be required to permit The Partnership staff to occasionally monitor worksites and to communicate directly with engaged businesses. Selected respondents will also be required to report employer relationships and services provided to businesses in Career Connect, The Partnership’s data management system. The Partnership will be mindful and respectful of service agency relationships with employers.

Further, The Partnership will develop internship opportunities and will connect selected service providers to employers. Service providers will be expected to work with the employers recruited by The Partnership.

Q32: Some of the questions on the proposals ask specifically for prior experience working with youth. Are you considering any first time agencies who want to serve or starting to serve youth but don't have that infrastructure fully in place yet?

A32: Service providers are not required to have experience working with youth and young adults, but their proposal will be scored based on their history and effectiveness in working with this population. Respondents must have access to and relationships with young adults. Also, respondents must have been in business and actively providing community level service for a minimum of three years prior to the start of the grant period.

Q33: Will the power point from the Bidders Conference be available to respondents?

A33: Yes, a copy of the presentation can be found at <http://workforceboard.org/opportunityworks>

Q34: If selected to be an Opportunity Works service provider, do agencies need to request the 33% advance of described in the proposal?

A34: Yes, selected respondents will be able to receive a 33% advance on the contracted award amount if they request it. The Partnership will explain the process to request an advance to selected respondents.

Q35: If our current staff already have a significant workload of 40 clients per staff, would they be ineligible to be used for this program?

A35: Opportunity Works requires a strict 1:15 FTE Career Mentor (or other frontline staff) to participant ratio. Staff can be partially assigned to work on Opportunity Works while working on other programs/contracts, but the total FTE dedicated to Opportunity Works must meet the 1:15 ratio requirement. For example, if a staff person is dedicated 50 percent to Opportunity Works, they should only be assigned to work with 7 to 8 participants.

Q36: For the 1:15 student service ratio, given the timeframe of the grant period, can we have 2 PTE Career Mentors (each 19 hrs. a week) vs. 1 FTE Career Mentor?

A36: Yes, this would be an acceptable way to reach the ratio of 1:15. i.e. 2 part-time Career Mentors to 15 participants.

Q37: Can provider also offer internships for youth?

A37: There could be scenarios where service providers could host youth interns and engage them in work related to one of the target sectors. Opportunity Works is focused on TDL, Manufacturing, IT and other high-growth, high-demand sectors. If a respondent is planning to place interns within their own organization, they must be clear and thorough in their explanation as to how the internships fit in the target sectors.

Q38: Do program volunteers count as staff in regard to the 1:15 ratio?

A38: No, volunteers do not count towards the 1:15 career mentor to participant ratio.

Q39: If chosen, what's the min/max number of young adults a respondent can serve?

A39: Respondents should propose to serve the number of participants that they have the capacity to serve effectively. Opportunity Works is currently funded to serve a total of 200 young adults in 2017. The Partnership hopes to increase this amount.

Q40: If you don't have current employers to produce MOUs for the proposal, will this have a negative scoring on the proposal?

A40: Existing and documented relationships with employers will positively impact a respondent's score.