REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS and PROPOSALS

External Evaluator for TAACCCT Round 3 Maine is IT! Project

ISSUE DATE: December 2, 2013

LETTERS OF INTEREST MUST BE RECEIVED BY: December 23, 2013

DELIVER TO:

Michelle Hawley
TAACCCT Round 3 Grant Project Manager
Central Maine Community College
1250 Turner Street
Auburn, Maine 04210
External Evaluator Services

Central Maine Community College (CMCC) is requesting letters of interest and qualifications from firms having expertise in providing comprehensive grant project evaluation services. These may include assisting the College in tracking progress toward goals with both quantitative and qualitative data; identifying areas of concern and assessing efforts to address those concerns; analyzing impact/outcomes; and designing the project evaluation. The evaluator will work with the Grant Project Manager to collect relevant data and to assess and provide feedback on progress toward the outcomes. The purpose of the RFQ is to determine the qualifications of the participants and potential costs of this project.

CMCC welcomes responses from all qualified firms.

Introduction to the Maine is IT! Project

To help address Maine’s critical and growing need for skilled information technology (IT) workers across many industries, a consortium of Maine’s seven community colleges—in partnership with employers, workforce development agencies, industry associations, and other institutions of higher education—will design and deliver comprehensive new training opportunities across the state. The project, Maine is IT!, will provide clear and comprehensive educational pathways to workers whose jobs have been affected by foreign trade, as well as veterans and other dislocated and incumbent workers. The project will include strong evidence based design; stacked and latticed credentials; clear transfer and articulation between and among Consortium members and other higher education partners; advanced online and technology enabled learning; and strategic alignment with state economic and workforce development plans and with numerous partners who are committed to the project’s goals and mission.

Maine is IT! will serve nearly 2,100 participants, providing dramatically improved access to IT training opportunities across the state and across a range of industries. In all, the project will create or expand 36 one-year certificates or two-year associate degree programs. It will enable participants to obtain and build upon a host of industry-recognized certifications and will provide multiple entry points, beginning with non-credit courses that bridge to courses and modules that award both college credit and industry recognized certifications and that are the building blocks of one- and two-year credentials leading to four-year degrees.

Intensive, ongoing collaboration among Consortium members and their partners will enable the project to develop, pilot, and implement advanced learning strategies and technologies aimed at strengthening remediation, retention, completion, and employment outcomes. The Consortium includes all seven of Maine’s community colleges and serves all of the state’s 16 counties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Service Area by County</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Maine Community College</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>Androscoggin, Oxford, Franklin, Lincoln</td>
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Nature and Scope of Work and Coordination of Efforts

A rigorous evaluation of the consortium project, **Maine is IT!**, will be conducted by a third-party evaluator, who will be selected through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process. The third-party evaluator will oversee all aspects of the evaluation, including the design of the project evaluation, the impact/outcomes analysis as well as the implementation analysis, our data collection, and analysis of data. A data sharing agreement between the third-party evaluator and the lead institution, Central Maine Community College (CMCC), will include steps to transmit personally identifiable data from any consortium member institution according to US DOL/ETA specifications to ensure proper handling of confidential data.

Participant Impact/Outcomes Analysis

**Maine is IT!** will use a comparison cohort (non-experimental) methodology to evaluate participant outcomes. Five hundred participants in the **Maine is IT!** project will be compared to 500 students entering similar programs, not impacted by grant-funded interventions. Participant and non-participant groups will be carefully chosen from the consortium member colleges. The third-party evaluator will assist in the selection of the comparison groups to ensure student background characteristics (such as scores on placement tests) are controlled as much as possible. Multivariate analysis of variance or regression, or other procedures as appropriate, will be used to compare participant and non-participant groups, controlling for demographic and other observed variables that may influence outcomes, to determine whether evidence exists to associate individual strategies with greater student success.

Data from consortium colleges’ enterprise systems will be mapped to the Maine Community College System (MCCS) data mart to meet requirements for the comparison methodology and grant annual performance reports (APR). Data variables such as the following will be collected for the participant and comparison groups in order to measure the success of the project impact and outcomes:

<p>| Student ID number | First, middle, last name and name suffix | SSN | Entry date to college | Program of study by semester | Course data (attempted and completed), including grades for each semester students complete until graduation |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester grade point average</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cumulative grade point average</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student demographic characteristics (date of birth, gender, disability, veteran, ethnicity/race, first generation student, prior college, TAA-eligible, incumbent worker)</td>
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<td>Placement test scores (ACCUPLACER, SAT, other)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If returning student, courses attempted and completed with grades prior to the start of the program</td>
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<tr>
<td>If transfer student, number of credits earned prior to start of program</td>
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<td>Degree status (registered, changed major, left school, completed program)</td>
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<td>Credits hours completed by grant year, total credits completed, credential completed</td>
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<td>Exit date</td>
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To obtain information about participants and non-participants enrolling in further education after grant-funded program of study, the **Maine is IT!** Fiscal and Administrative Officer will use the National Student Clearinghouse Student Tracker service and provide this data to the third-party evaluator. Outcomes related to employment and earnings after program completion will be obtained from the Maine Department of Labor’s Center for Workforce Research and Information (MDOL CWRI), which has an agreement with Maine’s community colleges to provide employment data for the colleges. The Fiscal and Administrative Officer and the third-party evaluator will be able to utilize the information obtained through this agreement for project participants and non-participants. MDOL CWRI will be able to provide this data approximately five months after a student’s exit date from the program. The transfer of data for employment outcomes will be conducted using a secure File Transfer Protocol (FTP) process and follow ETA guidelines for secure transfer of data, as agreed upon in writing between MDOL CWRI and the consortium.

The third-party evaluator and the Fiscal and Administrative Officer will compile educational outcomes data, disaggregated by subpopulations and by college, into quarterly reports on achievement and performance. Participant impact/outcomes analysis will show the impact of the grant activities on student retention and completion of one or more stackable pieces of the new IT education pathway and on participant employment in high-wage, high-demand IT occupations.

**Responses to RFQ**

Firms desiring to be considered should submit a letter indicating interest with proposals. Submission format: Electronic copy - Microsoft Word or PDF file, no page limit.

Responses should provide a description of the firm’s capabilities. Emphasis should be on the items noted below.
Qualifications:

A. Describe your qualifications including:
   
   a. Background, experience, and technical expertise, with particular emphasis on experience with educational institutions. If such work is limited, please describe work that is similar in nature and scale to what might be required by CMCC.
   
   b. The size of your firm and qualifications of key personnel who would work with CMCC. Include education, certifications, work experience, training and tenure with your firm.
   
   c. The evaluation services required are for a four-year grant which ends September 30, 2017. Responding entities should include information about their ability to ensure financial and human resource stability for the duration of the grant.

B. List three clients for whom similar work has been performed and provide a brief description of the services you provided. Please describe any projects that are similar in nature, size and complexity to what CMCC might need.

C. What is the location of the office(s) from which you would be staffing this effort?

D. Describe your firm’s mission statement or general operating philosophy. How is your firm unique? What are your demonstrated areas of strength?

E. Provide a list of three references - preferably from colleges and universities - for work performed within the last three years.

F. Provide a list of conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest related to any work that may be required as a result of the RFQ (see below). The list should indicate the name of the party, the relationship and a description of the conflict.

Proposals:

Submissions should include the firm’s ability to accomplish related tasks including, but not limited to the following:

a. Assist the Grant Project Manager with the collection of relevant data to assess and provide feedback on progress toward quarterly, yearly, and final measures.

b. Provide feedback and analysis at quarterly Project Performance Improvement team meetings (mainly via video/telephone conference) on program implementation and adjustments needed to achieve successful outcomes.

c. Determine whether the grant’s programs were developed as stated in the grant proposal, and whether the enhanced student services provided to program participants were accomplished with an appropriate design, were adequate, and
were properly handled, including comment on the success of learning communities and priority scheduling as elements.

d. Recommend institutionalizing aspects of the program that have proved most successful.

e. Refinement of research questions

f. Development of indicators and data definitions and identification of the data sources and data collection methods

g. Development of full evaluation design

h. Coordination with the grantee on the implementation of the evaluation

i. Knowledge of the data security and confidentiality procedures

j. Development of data collection instruments

k. Timing and execution of data collection

l. Appropriate analysis methods (including statistical, financial, and qualitative data analysis methods, etc.)

m. Monitoring and reporting of evaluation milestones and progress to the grantee and the department of labor (note: the proposers should expect to submit all evaluation deliverables, cleaned data, and progress reports to the Department of Labor as well as the grantee, as appropriate)

**Fee Structure**

Please provide your firm's fee structure and include hourly rates for different staff levels. CMCC will work directly with the selected firm to establish scope and project price including travel to consortium colleges annually, attendance of an in-person conference in Washington DC, and other related expenses.

While price is not exclusive for consideration, any proposals exceeding $200,000 should provide convincing evidence why expenditures beyond that amount are required.

**Competitive Negotiations**

The College shall negotiate a contract with the most qualified firm for professional evaluation services at compensation which the College determines is fair, competitive, and reasonable. In making such determination, the College shall conduct a detailed analysis of the cost of the services required in addition to considering their scope and complexity. All such contract price adjustments must be made within one year following the end of the contract.
Should the College be unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with the firm considered to be
the most qualified at a price the College determines to be fair, competitive, and reasonable,
negotiations with that firm must be formally terminated. The College shall then undertake
negotiations with the second most qualified firm. Failing accord with the second most qualified
firm, the College must terminate negotiations. The College shall then undertake negotiations
with the third most qualified firm.

Should the College be unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with any of the selected firms,
the College shall select additional firms in the order of their competence and qualification and
continue negotiations in accordance with this subsection until an agreement is reached.

**Conflict of Interest or Potential Conflict of Interest**

Contractors have an obligation to disclose any actual or potential conflict that may impact their
capacity to serve the best interest of CMCC, or that may reasonably be perceived as having this
effect. Failure to disclose such conflicts may lead to the disqualification of the contractor or the
termination of its contract. Central Maine Community College reserves the right to conside

**Process Regarding Selected Firms**

The third-party evaluator for *Maine is IT!* will be selected within the first quarter after grant
award. The consortium colleges are required to comply with the MCCS Finance Policy and
Procedures Manual that includes detailed guidance on all aspects of purchasing and
procurement, from competitive bidding to contracts and ethical practices.

In addition, the third-party evaluator’s Statement of Work (SOW) must be consistent with the
requirement of *Third Party Review of Grant Deliverables* in the Employment and Training
Administration, U.S. Department of Labor’s SGA-DFA-PY-10-03 specifically, “…Successful
evaluator applicants will be required to conduct reviews of the deliverables produced through
the grant” that DOL requires the grantee to produce and deliver based on the commitments
made in their original proposal.

An RFQ review team consisting of the Project Director or Interim, the MCCS Director of IR, and
representation from the consortium colleges will evaluate submissions based on the following
criteria:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Responses to the established evaluation criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall approach taken to address the technical components of the proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience designing and implementing project designs and evaluation for successful federal grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience working with institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client references and recommendations.</td>
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Deadline for questions is December 10. Review of submitted qualifications and proposals will start December 24. Finalist interviews will be scheduled for January. The team will recommend the award of a contract to the firm deemed most qualified to provide professional evaluation services for the project. Other firms will be ranked in order of their qualifications. Central Maine Community College, as the lead institution, will be responsible for the contract, and CMCC’s president shall make the final award. The College’s decisions will be final.

**College Professional Services Contract**

When CMCC engages a firm to provide services, the firm will be asked to sign a standard professional services contract setting forth the terms of the agreement. A copy follows for your review. Please do not fill it out at this time; it is only for your information. If you have a contract that you would prefer to use, please include it with your materials.

The firm(s) selected to provide services will be required to show evidence of, and maintain through the completion of services, all required insurance.

**Submissions: Mailing Information and Due Date**

All submissions should be addressed to:

Michelle Hawley  
TAACCCT Round 3 Grant Manager  
Central Maine Community College  
1250 Turner Street  
Auburn, Maine 04210  
mhawley@cmcc.edu

Letters of interest, qualifications and proposals should be received prior to **December 23, 2013 4:30 p.m.**

*Central Maine Community College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and employer. For more information, please call 207-755-5233.*
NOTICE TO VENDORS AND BIDDERS:

STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL MCCS CONTRACTS

The following standard contracting terms and conditions are incorporated and shall become a part of any final contract that will be awarded by any college or other operating unit of the Maine Community College System (collectively “MCCS”). These terms and conditions derive from the public nature and limited resources of the MCCS. **MCCS DOES NOT AGREE TO:**

1. Provide any defense, hold harmless or indemnity;
2. Waive any statutory or constitutional immunity;
3. Apply the law of a state other than Maine;
4. Procure types or amounts of insurance beyond those MCCS already maintains or waive any rights of subrogation;
5. Add any entity as an additional insured to MCCS policies of insurance;
6. Pay attorneys’ fees, costs, expenses or liquidated damages;
7. Promise confidentiality in a manner contrary to Maine’s Freedom of Access Act;
8. Permit an entity to change unilaterally any term or condition once the contract is signed; and
9. Automatic renewals for term(s) greater than month-to-month.

By submitting a response to a Request for Proposal, bid or other offer to do business with MCCS, **YOUR ENTITY UNDERSTANDS AND AGREES THAT:**

1. The above standard terms and conditions are thereby incorporated into any agreement entered into between MCCS and your entity; that such terms and condition shall control in the event of any conflict with such agreement; and that your entity will not propose or demand any contrary terms;
2. The above standard terms and conditions will govern the interpretation of such agreement notwithstanding the expression of any other term and/or condition to the contrary;
3. Your entity will not propose to any college or other operating unit of the MCCS any contractual documents of any kind that are not in at least 11-point font and completely contained in one Word or PDF document, and that any references to terms and conditions, privacy policies or any other conditions referenced outside of the contract will not apply; and
4. Your entity will identify at the time of submission which, if any, portion or your submitted materials are entitled to “trade secret” exemption from disclosure under Maine’s Freedom of Access Act; that failure to so identify will authorize MCCS to conclude that no portions are so exempt; and that your entity will defend, indemnify and hold harmless MCCS in any and all legal actions that seek to compel MCCS to disclose under Maine’s Freedom of Access Act some or all of your submitted materials and/or contract, if any, executed between MCCS and your entity.