

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

RFI No. 2019-RFI-014

JULY 20, 2017

**Washington Adult Reengagement Statewide
Outreach and Student Information Tools**

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), in collaboration with its state partners, plans to develop the infrastructure and support for adults who have not completed a college degree or other type of postsecondary credential to achieve their academic and career goals, earn a living wage, and contribute to Washington’s vital economy.

The three key components of this plan include:

COMMUNICATE WITH ADULTS	Develop an online tool/portal that will leverage existing tools and effectively outreach to connect returning adult students to programs and helpful information
COST BARRIERS	Address affordability-related barriers, including access to financial aid and prior debt accumulation
DEGREE COMPLETION	Develop regional, career-focused, adult friendly pathway, address enrollment barriers and expand supports for returning adult students

WSAC requests the following information from the vendor community on the first of the three key components:

- 1) Identify the most effective state level resources to communicate with adult students as they consider reengagement into postsecondary education in Washington. At a minimum, the portal would include an online information tool for adult students to assess academic and career options, inform them of resources available to support their pursuits, and contact institutions that may meet their needs. Ideally, the portal would integrate and/or leverage other state and local tools.
- 2) Explore the possible portal features and functions, with an indication of timeline and costs to develop each.
- 3) Proposed a comprehensive scope of work that would inform the preparation of a Request for Proposal (RFP).

WSAC greatly appreciates vendor responses if the vendor:

- Has suggestions that could help WSAC with this project
- Is interested in receiving a solicitation for this project
- Knows of other suppliers who may be interested in receiving a solicitation.

WSAC is very interested in hearing from individuals and firms that have expertise or provide services in:

- Adult Learning
- Enrollment management and outreach
- Higher education portal development

[Intent and Limitations of RFI](#)

This RFI is not an offer of work or an RFP. WSAC is not currently soliciting for bids on this work.

WSAC does anticipate it will use the information gathered from this RFI to develop a document for competitive procurement. WSAC is interested in creating a list of firms that may be interested in submitting a bid should it issue an RFP. WSAC will email vendors who respond to the RFI a copy of the procurement document when and if it is released, as a part of its normal procurement process.

This RFI is not to be construed as a commitment by WSAC nor will WSAC pay for the information solicited herein or any of the costs of preparation. Vendors responding to this RFI and those choosing not to respond will not influence any part of the procurement process for a future acquisition.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WSAC is a cabinet-level agency, created in 2012 to provide strategic planning, oversight and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. In pursuit of its mission, WSAC leads statewide strategic planning to improve educational coordination and student transitions, supports Washingtonians through the administration of financial aid, a college savings plan, and support services, and advocates for the economic, social, and civic benefits of postsecondary education.

In 2013, WSAC developed the state's ten-year strategic plan ([Roadmap](#)) to increase educational attainment, reflecting the goals adopted by the Washington State Legislature. Every two years, the Strategic Action Plan lays out a legislative agenda for higher education and recommends the resources and policies needed to make progress toward the state's attainment goals. The [2017 Strategic Action Plan](#) requests, among other things, the [creation of a framework to recruit and retain adult learners](#). The Washington Adult Reengagement Framework will provide the infrastructure and support for former students to achieve their academic and career goals, earn a living wage and contribute to Washington's vital economy as the state makes meaningful progress toward reaching its attainment goals.

More than 75 percent of job openings in Washington require education beyond high school. To meet this need for skilled employees, Washington State adopted a goal of at least 70 percent of all adults (ages 25-44) completing a postsecondary certificate or degree.

The objective of the Washington Adult Reengagement Framework is to prepare students for success in family wage jobs in Washington State. Financial constraints and family obligations often lead college students to withdraw from or postpone their education. With less education, adults are more likely to experience periods of unemployment and have lower wages. Finishing a college credential would improve career earnings and employment outcomes.

The Washington Adult Reengagement Framework includes three major components: communications, cost and completion. Figure 1 describes the key activities in each component.

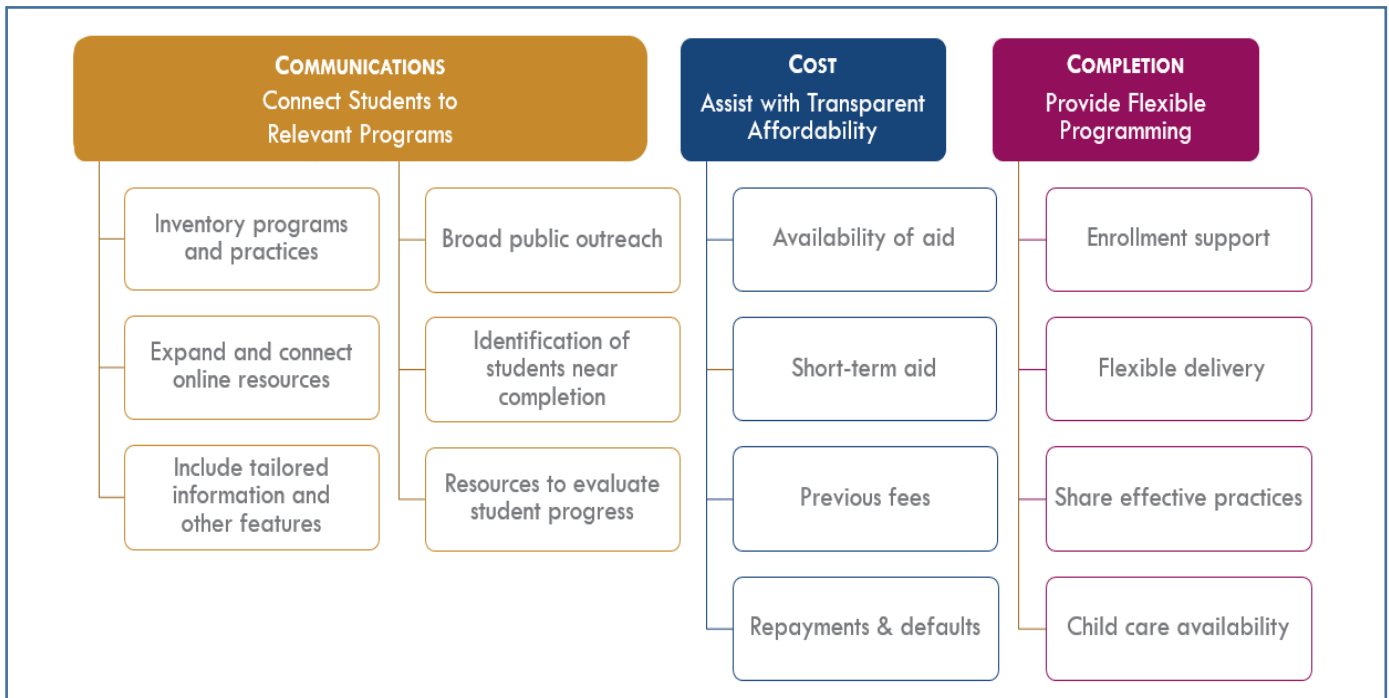


Figure 1: Washington Adult Reengagement Framework Components

The Washington Adult Reengagement Framework will create an adult-friendly system to address unique barriers (time, place and money) through career-focused, affordable and responsive programs. The foundational elements of the framework will be developed in 2017 through 2019. The framework will be developed with a focus on regional partnerships, engaging employers, non-profit organizations and higher education institutions.

Communications

The communications component is the focus of this request for information. The intent is to develop an online tool to provide relevant, accurate and tailored information to connect returning adults to programs. The framework will use targeted outreach and broad marketing efforts. It will leverage existing tools in Washington and determine the features and a platform for the “matching” tool. The tool will also support professionals working with adults from community-based organizations, employers and higher education institutions.

Cost

The cost component addresses affordability related barriers, including access to financial aid and barriers related to previous debt accumulation (from fees to student loans or grant repayments).

WSAC has identified a resource to develop a statewide emergency grant for participating institutions to support returning adults who meet established eligibility criteria.

Completion

The completion component provides understandable career-focused and adult friendly pathways with local leadership (from institutions as well as employers) to address enrollment barriers and support returning adults in their completion of a meaningful credential. The completion component will leverage existing efforts including guided pathways, math pathways, statewide transfer agreements, prior learning assessment and flexible program delivery models. Statewide learning opportunities will encourage institutions to assess their services to returning adults using the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning assessment tools and other resources.

Alternative Portal Options

At this time WSAC is considering the feasibility of alternative development options, including but not limited to:

- Turnkey/Software as a service – leveraging already developed tools customized to the extent needed to meet Washington’s needs;
- Updates and improvement to existing resources in place in Washington.
- Development of custom web development of a new tool for Washington.

TERMINOLOGY AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Washington Student Achievement Council – A cabinet-level state agency that provides strategic planning, oversight, and advocacy to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington.

Adult Reengagement Framework – Provides the infrastructure and support for adults without a degree or meaningful postsecondary credential to achieve their academic and career goals, earn a living wage, and contribute to Washington’s vital economy.

Roadmap – The Roadmap sets a clear course to increase educational attainment for Washingtonians, leading to better-prepared high school graduates and more adults who earn postsecondary credentials--all primary contributors to a robust and prosperous Washington. The state’s 2013 Roadmap establishes two educational attainment goals for 2023: All adults in Washington, ages 25-44, will have a high school diploma or equivalent; and at least 70 percent of Washington adults, ages 25-44, will have a postsecondary credential.

Strategic Action Plan – The Strategic Action Plan includes specific policy and investment recommendations to make significant progress toward the state's educational attainment goals.

Advisory Group – Provides guidance on development of all project deliverables, seeks opportunities for WSAC to promote this initiative and align with other efforts, and ensures appropriate stakeholder participation.

Technical Team – Provides technical assistance, input and support to WSAC staff and the Advisory team as we develop key components of the framework for adult reengagement.

HOW TO RESPOND

Vendors that have expertise in providing the services described in this RFI are invited to attend the following meeting:

Monday, July 31, 2017

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

WSAC Office – 917 Lakeridge Way SW, Olympia WA 98504

Please RSVP to Gray Sterling at grays@wsac.wa.gov by July 28, 2017. You can join the meeting in person or over the internet. Inform Gray of your preference when you RSVP.

The meeting will explore answers to the questions set forth below.

In addition, vendors may provide a written response on or before the date provided in the timeline below. The written response should consist of answers to the following questions in this section, organized in the same order and using the same categories.

1.1 Your Profile

Briefly describe your company/organization, your services, history, ownership, financial information, and other information you deem relevant. In particular, please describe engagements you have been involved in that are similar in concept to what is described in this RFI.

1.2 Determining the Scope of Work for an RFP

- Recommended Development Approach:
 - Turn-key / Software as a Service – leveraging already developed tools customized to the extent needed to meet Washington’s needs;
 - Updates and improvement to existing resources in place in Washington.
 - Development – custom web development of a new tool for Washington.
 - Definition of the business activities supported by the system.
- Key features and functions of recommended system

- Include both prospect / student facing features and functions and features and functions available to state, institutional, and community groups providing support for system implementation.
- Timeline necessary to develop and implement a system (also note whether a phased implementation or a full roll out would be a preferred approach).
- Data and information needed to support development of the resource and/or sources of data if not provided through state administrative or institutional systems.
- Data and reporting of the system – what type of information would be available to support implementation at the state level and what would be provided at the institutional / community level.
- Resources (funding and other resources including staff time of sponsoring agency and/or participating stakeholders) necessary to implement and maintain the recommended product.

1.3 Principles

Statement of the business principles governing the system and their rationale. These principles can either come from the organization architecture, the business rules or from the industry standards.

For example, a principle could be: “The high-priority systems must be equipped with a firewall.”

1.4 Key Issues

Description of the key issues likely to hinder attainment of objectives, including issues related to the scope of the information system and the overall feasibility.

1.5 Security Guideline

Definition of security requirements for the new system to guide the work of the preliminary analysis phase regarding security.

1.6 Accessibility

Discuss design features needed to make portal accessible to people with disabilities.

1.7 Creating a List of Firms That May be Interested in Bidding on an RFP

Would you be interested in bidding on this project? Please tell us why or why not (be as specific as possible).

1.8 Additional Materials and Other Information We Should Consider

Please provide any other materials, suggestions, and discussion you deem appropriate.

TIMELINE

Written responses to this RFI should be received no later than 5:00 PM PDT Friday, August 25, 2017.

Responses should be submitted to:

Ellen Matheny
Washington Student Achievement Council
917 Lakeridge Way SW
PO Box 43430
Olympia, WA 98504-3430

Electronic submissions in formats compatible with Microsoft Word 2013 are encouraged and preferred. Email directly to: ellenm@wsac.wa.gov

Questions should be directed to Randy Spaulding, Director of Academic Affairs & Policy, at (360) 753-7823 or randys@wsac.wa.gov.

WSAC reserves the right to revise the RFI timeline or other portions of this RFI at any time, and to cancel or reissue this RFI at any time without obligation or liability.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This RFI does not obligate WSAC or the State of Washington to contract for any services described in response to this RFI, nor does a response guarantee any advantage to the Responder. All materials submitted in response to this RFI become the property of WSAC. WSAC reserves the right to use any of the ideas presented in any materials offered in developing any competitive solicitation for portal development services. Although no solicitation is available at this time, we will send companies/ organizations responding to this RFI a copy of the procurement document when and if it is released.

The period of performance of any contract resulting from a competitive procurement for portal development services is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about January 15, 2018. If WSAC releases a procurement document, the following is a possible schedule of activity:

PROCUREMENT STEPS	TIMEFRAME
Issue RFP	October 2017
Question and answer period	October 2017
Proposals due	November 2017

Evaluate proposals	November-December 2017
Conduct oral interviews with finalists, if required	December 2017
Announce “Apparent Successful Bidder”	December 2017
Finalize and sign contract	January 2018
Begin implementation	January 2018

PROPRIETARY OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

All submissions, in any format, are subject to the [Public Records Act](#), unless stated otherwise.

Any information contained in your response that is proprietary or confidential must be clearly designated as such. The page and the particular exceptions(s) from disclosure must be identified. Each page claimed to be exempt from disclosure must be clearly identified by the word “confidential” printed on the lower right hand corner of the page. Marking the entire response as confidential will be neither accepted nor honored and may result in disclosure of the entire response. The Respondent must be reasonable in designating information as confidential. To the extent consistent with chapter 42.56 RCW, the Public Records Act, WSAC will maintain the confidentiality of vendor’s information marked “confidential” or “proprietary.” If a request is made to view vendor’s proprietary information, WSAC will notify vendor of the request and of the date that the records will be released to the requester unless vendor obtains a court order enjoining that disclosure. If vendor fails to obtain a court order enjoining disclosure, WSAC will release the requested information on the date specified.