

Neighborhood Jobs Trust

RFP Letter of Clarification and Q&A

This Letter of Clarification summarizes the main points of discussion at the NJT RFP Bidder's Conference on October 27, 2015 and also contains questions that were received throughout the process. While much of this Letter of Clarification simply reiterates information in the RFP, there are some points of clarification and applicants should treat this document as an addendum to the RFP. **Every Monday**, OWD will be updating the responses to the questions received during the procurement process; it is the sole responsibility of the prospective bidders to check the website for updates and postings. Please read it carefully.

- *The single point of contact for questions related to this RFP is Vroselyn.Benjamin@boston.gov. Please submit questions via email so that a record may be kept of questions and responses. No phone calls will be accepted regarding the RFP.*
- *Please note, the OWD web address listed on page 13 of the RFP is wrong. The website is owd.boston.gov.*
- *Letter of Intent to Bids are due to cindy.chow@boston.gov via email by Wednesday, November 4th by 5pm. We strongly encourage you to submit a Letter of Intent, but a Letter of Intent is not required to submit a full proposal.*
- *Proposals are due to cindy.chow@boston.gov via **email** by Friday November, 20th by 5pm. This is a strict deadline. Please submit your proposal in **one single PDF document**.*
- *The ultimate goal of programs funded under this RFP is full-time (defined as 30 hours a week) work at a livable wage (\$14.11/hour). Part-time job placements (defined as 20 hours a week) are permissible as a strategic first step, but must be explained and justified in your proposal. Placement into post-secondary programs leading to employment is also a permissible outcome, but must be clearly articulated and justified in your response to the RFP.*
- *The NJT contract is performance-based with vendors receiving 50% of their grant award upon contract execution and 50% upon reaching placement goal.*
- *Each proposal will be reviewed by a team of readers. The point values awarded to each section of the proposal are an evaluation tool; they do not dictate which proposals are recommended for funding. Staff will take into consideration such additional factors such as past performance, mix of services, and neighborhood coverage in developing recommendations.*
- *The Trust has approximately \$1.2M in available funding. We are likely to receive proposals requesting, in total, several times that amount, making this a highly competitive procurement in which not all proposals will be funded. Applicants should respond carefully and thoughtfully to each of the questions posed in the RFP.*
- ***It has come to our attention that the 2nd page of Appendix B (The Proposal Cover Sheet) of the NJT RFP was not a fillable form. We have updated The Proposal Cover Sheet and now both pages are fillable forms. You can download the RFP at owd.boston.gov. Please note, if your agency needs additional rows on the Proposal Cover Sheet to fit all of your partners, you will have to create your own page with similar text boxes to indicate additional partner information. If you do need to add a page, please include that in your submitted single PDF file for your entire proposal (do not submit it as an additional file).***

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Questions & Answers

- 1. Can case management be considered a leveraged cost?**
 - a. Yes.
- 2. Can we include in the budget items such as stipend, ID's, transportation...etc.?**
 - a. Yes, they are allowable costs, and keep in mind that the award grants range from \$50,000 - \$100,000 for a period of one year.
- 3. Is there a baseline of number of people to be served?**
 - a. No, this is determined by each applicant.
- 4. Does a job training service need to be a recognized certificate program?**
 - a. Not necessarily but it needs to demonstrate strong connection and outcome to employment with strong employer partnership(s).
- 5. Do we set the administrative costs (indirect rates) in the proposal?**
 - a. Yes, include this information as part of your budget.
- 6. The goal is full-time with living wage, but the RFP says lower rates are accepted for populations that face more barriers.**
 - a. Full-time employment that meets or exceeds living wage is the goal of the RFP but your response can argue for placements that are less than full-time at lower hourly rates if this is a strategic first step for your population.
- 7. Is the performance based funding only awarded if participants are placed in a living wage job?**
 - a. It depends on your program design and the nature of your job placement. The outcome of the program must be a training-related job or placement into a post-secondary program leading to a position that is full-time and meets or exceeds the living wage of \$14.11. If, because of your target population, you anticipate placement rates or wages below these levels, you must provide a clear and compelling explanation as to why these performance standards should not apply to your program. Your specific performance based funding will be discussed during contract negotiation.
- 8. Is there a preference for targeted industries sectors versus participants' choice for their own track?**
 - a. Programs should lead to permanent employment at a living wage, with strong employer partnerships.
- 9. How do you define residency for participants who are homeless?**

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- a. A homeless shelter would provide documentation that they are residing in a shelter in Boston. If the participant is couch surfing or moving from house to house, the host would indicate that they are residing within Boston.

10. Is job retention tracked for 30 days?

- a. Yes.

11. The goal is full-time employment, but if an organization works with youth with disabilities in high school (18-22), is it possible to make an exception if youth are placed in part-time work?

- a. Page 8 of the RFP states the anticipated employment rates. You'd need to make a compelling argument as to why part-time work would be most appropriate for your target population. Please note, part-time work is considered 20hrs/week.

12. How many hours of training is to be expected in job placement training?

- a. This is determined by each applicant to inform us of your program design which includes hours of training.

13. What is the expectancy once participants complete the training, is there a window that they must be employed within a certain period of time?

- a. Because NJT is a performance-based contract, it is expected that they will be employed within the grant period of 12 months. Vendors will also be provided an extra 90 days after their contract ends to reach their placement goal.

14. Is there a preference for a pre-apprenticeship program vs. an apprentice/training program?

- a. There's no preference between the two as long as it leads to a permanent job placement at a living wage.

15. What determines the amount of the budget?

- a. You develop the budget, and you can ask anywhere within the range of \$50,000 - \$100,000.

16. Is reporting done through MOSES?

- a. No, OWD requests quarterly online submission for numbers using Google Docs. Individual participant data is tracked through enrollment rosters and an address log. Site visits are done yearly.

17. If funded, would we need to report on a cost per participant?

- a. This would be included in the RFP, not in the quarterly reporting.

18. Can participants co-enroll in NJT and CDBG?

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- a. No, a participant cannot co-enroll in NJT and CDBG; however, a participant can be enrolled in two different programs funded by two different grants for different services.

19. Does a computer skills training w/ ESOL classes and a focus on leading to employment fit the RFP's program design?

- a. Stand-alone ESOL or ABE programs will not be funded under the scope of the RFP - if applicants are proposing to provide ESOL program, then it will need to be ESOL for Employment that can demonstrate a strong connection to employment.

20. How does reimbursement work?

- a. A cash advance of 50% of the award is provided upon contract execution. Then the remaining 50% is based on performance on a training-related job placement that is full-time (30 hours a week), at or above living wage of \$14.11/hour.

21. Are full-time jobs through temp agencies allowable and counted towards job placement?

- a. No, the scope of the RFP is to place Boston residents seeking full-time *permanent* employment.

22. What is the average award amount for fiscal year 2015?

- a. The average award for FY-2015 was \$53,287.75.

23. If we apply for \$100,000 and are awarded \$50,000, will outcomes be adjusted down?

- a. Yes, this would be reviewed during the contract negotiation.

24. Is there a deadline for written questions?

- a. No, but applicants should plan in advance and not wait until the last minute to submit questions.

25. When is payment for placements given?

- a. Quarterly.

26. Are subcontractors, referrals, etc. allowable or are organizations expected to provide all services?

- a. Organizations can work with partner agencies for subcontracts and referrals, but the budget breakdown should make sense to the program model you propose. Each applicant will determine its own rationale for partnership responsibilities. The details should be included in the budget narrative and shown on the contract line item in the budget. Please note, reimbursements for placements will be counted for only one organization that is providing the training. Therefore, the participant can only be counted as enrolled within one NJT funded training program.

27. Are subcontractors allowable?

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- a. Please see answer to #26.
- 28. If hiring for a position listed in my proposal, is indicating “To Be Hired” okay on the budget for the RFP?**
- a. Yes.
- 29. Is there a limit on personnel in the budget?**
- a. No, just be mindful of a balanced budget.
- 30. Can programs propose to meet both employment and education outcomes?**
- a. Yes, both are allowed but please note that the applicant must indicate why a participant is being placed into an educational placement instead of directly into employment.
- 31. For a student who participates in employer training program and decides to pursue education instead of employment, will the outcome be post-secondary placement, with a 30 day retention?**
- a. Yes. But, please note that applicant must indicate why a participant is being placed into an educational placement instead of directly into employment. Educational placements must have evidence of value or recognition in the particular economic sector leading to better opportunities for advancement.
- 32. Would two part-time jobs be considered a full-time placement?**
- a. No.
- 33. Can a graduating 17 year-old who will be 18 year-old within 6 months be enrolled as a NJT participant?**
- a. No, all participant have to be 18 years old upon program enrollment.
- 34. Can participants who are undocumented enroll?**
- a. Each participant must meet the eligibility guideline (page 5 of the RFP) and have work authorization in the United States.
- 35. When you refer to Boston’s living wage of \$14.11, is this an average or minimum?**
- a. Each participant should be placed, minimally, at \$14.11 or more, but if you are unable to meet this standard, please indicate as to why in your proposal.
- 36. Should we provide recent agency audit in the response to the RFP?**
- a. Yes.
- 37. For an indirect rate can occupancy be listed as a separate line item in my budget?**
- a. Yes, occupancy can be separate.

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38. Does ESOL program need to use standardized testing?

- a. One of the required service elements in the RFP is assessment so this is where you would discuss any assessment your program is using to ensure participants are successful and receive appropriate services.

39. Will we get a receipt of the RFP e-mail submission?

- a. Yes, we will send you an email receipt.

40. Is there a template for the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with employers?

- a. No, as long as it states clearly the roles and responsibilities of the employer, there is no specific template for MOA with employers.

41. On Page 3 of the RFP, it says “programs which currently run training programs based on training vouchers should not expect to receive a group contract under this RFP simply to serve more people. What does that mean?”

- a. The key word is “simply.” You should not assume, just because vouchers only partially cover the cost of your program, that you will get an NJT award to fund the balance of your program. You need to make a compelling argument as to why NJT should fund your program - your proposal must meet the scope of the RFP.

42. Page 4 of the RFP, states that post-secondary programs must lead to employment. Please explain.

- a. Applicants need to tie how placing a participant into a post-secondary program will lead to better wages and career advancement. Placements into educational outcomes must be mapped out to be considered a payable outcome. Please note, applicant must indicate why a participant is being placed into an educational placement instead of directly into employment. Educational placements must have evidence of value or recognition in the particular economic sector leading to better opportunities for advancement.

43. For ESOL participants, if we placed them into a skills training program can this be considered an allowable placement?

- a. No, placement has to be in a permanent job.

44. If as an agency we placed a participant in Bunker Hill Community College, is this considered an allowable and payable placement?

- a. Yes. While the RFP is primarily focused on getting people into jobs, appropriate post-secondary placement with a demonstrated connection to employment can be an acceptable outcome. Proposals must make the case for why some, or all, participants might achieve such outcomes instead of a job. Please also review the response to #42.

45. Can seasonal job placement be considered a placement?

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- a. No, placement has to be in a permanent job.

46. Can internal job placement be considered as an outcome?

- a. It depends on the program design but please note that the outcome of your program must be a *training-related job*. Please note that it has to be permanent employment, full-time, and meets the living wage of \$14.11/hour.

47. Can it be all educational placements, even though it's a one year grant and we won't know employment placement within a contract period?

- a. You will need to make compelling argument why your agency is not placing participants directly into jobs but instead into post-secondary education. Proposals must make the case for why some, or all, participants might achieve such outcomes instead of a job and how it fits into a career path based on the scope of the RFP.

48. What will be different from last year RFP?

- a. Last year, total available funds was \$1.2 million and the awards ranged from \$25,000 to \$90,000. This year total available funds remain the same at \$1.2 million in the trust with awards ranging from \$50,000 - \$100,000.

49. What documentation will we be asked to provide to document a participant who has a CORI?

- a. That will be determined in the upcoming program year. Please note, OWD will work to ensure that the documentation process will not be time-consuming for vendors.

50. Do we have to collect documentation for participants who fits within the 25% targeted enrollment benchmark?

- a. Yes.

51. What does "Provide reference for administrative capabilities" on page 10 of the RFP mean?

- a. Please provide a reference from your past or current funder that can attest to your organization's administrative capabilities.

52. If a participant was placed at a full-time job for 2 weeks and then left that job and moved to another full-time job for 30 days, does that count as a placement?

- a. The second job would be considered a placement because the participant have retained that position for 30 days.

53. Can an employer partner be an agency/organization/company from the public sector?

- a. Yes.

54. On page 8 of the RFP, you say "Both OJT and transitional employment are expensive models; applicants are encouraged to find matching funds to cover some or all of the

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costs of subsidized wages for participants.” Please clarify. And will I need to produce a backup for the match?

- a. Match would help a proposal, particularly for transitional employment and on-the-job training programs, where participant wages make the model more expensive. There is no match requirement. And you do not need to produce a backup document.

55. If the participant is homeless, can the service provider use the participant’s last address of residency in Boston to document residency?

- a. At the time of enrollment the participant has to be a Boston resident and have to have proof of current residency. If the participant is in shelter the shelter staff must provide documentation of shelter service to include in participant’s file. If the participant is bouncing from house to house the participant must obtain a letter from the host verifying residency or complete a self-certified letter which will be provided to each vendor before they commence programming.

56. What organizations are currently being funded from the NJT’s FY-15 RFP?

- a. NJT is currently funding 20 organizations from the NJT’s FY-15 RFP: Action for Boston Community Development, Inc (ABCD), Asian American Civic Association (AACA), BEST Corp. Hospitality Training Center, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC), Building and Construction Trades Council of the Boston Metro Area, Community Servings, Friends of Boston’s Homeless, International Institute of Boston (IIB), Interseminarian-Project Place, Jewish Vocational Services (JVS), Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries, New England Center for Homeless Veterans, Operation A.B.L.E., Project Hope, St. Mary’s Center for Women and Children, STRIVE: Boston Employment Services, Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts (ULEM), Work Inc., YMCA: Training, Inc., and YouthBuild Boston.

57. Does the employment have to be located in Boston?

- a. No - but please note that the goal of the Trust is to provide low and moderate income Boston residents direct services which prepare them for and connect them to employment.

58. Some of our graduates are self-employed. Would this count?

- a. It depends on the program design but please note that the outcome of your program must be a *training-related job* - for example, if your training program is to help participants start their own businesses, then this may be an acceptable outcome - please note that it has to be permanent employment, full-time, and meets the living wage of \$14.11/hour.

59. We serve many Boston residents. Not all of them qualify as low and moderate income. In our proposal, should we focus on every Boston resident or just those that would qualify for this initiative?

- a. To be eligible under this grant, your program participants must meet certain eligibility criteria. Please review page 5 of the RFP for the participant eligibility criteria.

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60. Is my organization eligible to apply?

- a. OWD will not be able to provide guidance on whether your organization is eligible to apply. Please review page 4-5 of the RFP to determine your eligibility.

61. Do you want to see potential employer partners in the letter of intent?

- a. No.

62. When will the Letter of Clarification and the Q&A regarding the NJT RFP be posted? Where are the responses to questions posted?

- a. The Letter of Clarification and Q&A will be updated and posted on the OWD website every Monday. The OWD website is owd.boston.gov.

63. My organization provide employment to our participants after completing our program so we don't typically enter into an employer partner relationship with other agencies however we do have internships available through our partners. Will the relationships I described fit the guidelines for an employer partner?

- a. It depends on your program design and the nature of your program. Please review page 7 and 11 of the RFP which describes the scope of employer partnership for this RFP.

64. Is the Letter of Intent (LOI) Appendix A of the RFP? If so, does OWD want Appendix A to be accompanied by a formal business letter?

- a. Yes the Letter of Intent can be found in Appendix A of the RFP. And no OWD is not requesting a formal business letter - just the LOI is sufficient.

65. Where can I download the LOI and how can I complete the LOI?

- a. You can download the RFP at owd.boston.gov. The LOI is Appendix A of the RFP and it's a fillable PDF.

66. One of our staff members owns a business, this business is one of our employer partners who is willing to interview our participants for a position at their company after completing our training program. Will this be a conflict of interest? This staff member would also be receiving a stipend for their work in our program, Will this be a conflict of interest?

- a. This may be a conflict of interest in two ways:
 - i. OWD's expectation is that staff members from organizations funded from the NJT RFP will have as their primary interest the placement of participants in jobs or educational programs leading to jobs. Having a paid staff member who owns a private business involved in "the hiring process" for participants, may create a conflict of interest between that staff member as a business owner and the best interests of participants.
 - ii. Conflict of interest is defined as not only the practice of conflicting interests but also the possible appearance of a conflict of interest to a reasonable unbiased

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observer. Having a private employer who is also in a paid position under this grant involved in “the hiring process”- especially one involved in working with participants on job placement - might have the appearance of conflict of interest and in that case OWD would advise against this staffing structure. An appearance of a private employer being paid by public funds to enhance his or her own business is a conflict of interest and an improper use of public funds.

67. If my organization was a recipient of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding are we still eligible to apply for the NJT grant?

- a. If your organization have received funding through one of our RFP processes in the past (this includes CDBG) this does not disqualify you from applying to this RFP process. Also please review the response to question #60.

68. Regarding eligibility criteria for program participants, does the housing voucher qualification include both site-specific Section 8 housing and mobile vouchers?

- a. Yes, both recipients of Section 8 site-specific vouchers and recipients of government funded mobile vouchers count towards meeting the **25% eligibility criteria of the targeted enrollment benchmark** requested in this RFP.

69. In terms of potential partnerships, would it be possible for my organization to explore a partnership with another NJT funded organization?

- a. Yes, but please note the RFP requires that you indicate a lead applicant when services provided through partnerships or collaborations. Any agency can certainly be a partner in more than one proposal, however, if two collaborating agencies submit the same proposals with different leads, it would be unlikely that both will get funded.
- b. Please note that NJT is a performance-based contract, and that participant enrollments and outcomes cannot be double counted by members of a partnership. Each enrollment or positive outcome leading to payment can only be counted once and attributed to one partner of a partnership.

70. Can two NJT-funded agencies collaborate, if one NJT-funded program at the first agency feeds participants into another non-NJT funded program at the second agency will this arrangement be double-counting positive outcomes/enrollment for program participants?

- a. For each organization or partnership funded by NJT, a participant can only be counted once for an enrollment and be counted once for payment for a positive outcome considered a payable placement.

71. On the Cover Letter of the RFP it asks for "funding from other sources", does that mean funds we have already secured for this grant period? Or our projected funds?

- a. It means both funds you have already secured for this grant period and other projected funds you're expecting to secure during the grant period.

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72. On the Cover Letter of the RFP it asks for “anticipated outcomes.” Is this referring only to NJT participants? Or our program as a whole?

- a. “Anticipated outcomes” refers only to NJT participants.

73. Who will see these MOAs that will be attached to my agency’s’ proposal and are they going to be posted and/or available to the public?

- a. The review committee for this procurement process will see the MOA and all OWD/BRA/EDIC staff will have access to all proposals. The proposals will not be posted to the public; however if a member of the public submits a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request to review responses to the RFP they might be granted access to this information.

74. My agency would prefer to submit our MOAs in this format: a cover sheet outlining the partners captured in the MOAs, then the MOAs with the company names/addresses redacted. This proposed format will ensure that we are maintaining strong relationships and protecting identifying/proprietary information. Will this format be acceptable by the NJT RFP guidelines?

- a. We expect all agencies to submit their MOAs in their own format. The MOAs submitted must include specific commitments, roles and responsibilities that the partner is making to assist the program and must include the company’s name and contact information. MOAs should be signed by a person with authority to do so on behalf of the organization.

75. I’m finding it difficult to list partners in the PDF version of Appendix B (The Proposal Cover Sheet). Would it be possible to get a copy of the Proposal Cover Sheet in a Word Document?

- a. No, OWD does not have a Word Doc of Appendix B. But, if you need to include another sheet to list your list of partners you will have to create your own page with similar text boxes to indicate additional partner information. If you do need to add a page, please include that in your submitted single PDF file for your entire proposal (do not submit it as an additional file).