

**NYS Department of State
NY State Office for New Americans
Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants**

Request for Applications # 20-ONA-30 Questions & Answers

The responses to questions included herein are the official responses by the State to questions submitted by potential applicants and are hereby incorporated into RFA # 20-ONA-30 issued on February 24, 2021. In the event of any conflict between the RFA and these responses, the requirements or information contained in these responses will prevail.

Section III Applicant Eligibility is hereby amended to add the following:

Subcontracting:

For applicants engaging subcontractors to work under this grant, the lead applicant must provide the majority of direct programming.

All applicants intending to subcontract work under this grant should complete and execute a letter of intent with each subcontractor that specifies all services each partner agrees to provide. Letters of Intent/MOUs may be submitted with the application to substantially demonstrate capacity.

If using a subcontractor, the applicant must be responsible for the performance of any services provided by the partners, consultants, or other organizations and must coordinate how each plans to participate.

In addition, the subcontractor is prohibited from subcontracting funds to other recipients.

Section IX. B. 1. is hereby amended to read:

1. Submit articles of incorporation showing that the applicant organization is incorporated for the purpose of providing services or other assistance to economically or socially disadvantaged persons within its designated community. Such organizations must have a board of directors of which more than half of the members reside in such designated community (provide a complete list of current board members with full addresses, which demonstrates that more than half of the members reside in the area in which the organization may operate according to its certificate of incorporation is incorporated). This documentation should be submitted with the application as Attachment 4: Articles of Incorporation and Board List.

Section X. B. 1. is hereby amended to read:

1. Submit articles of incorporation showing that the applicant organization is incorporated for the purpose of providing services or other assistance to economically or socially disadvantaged persons within its designated community. Such organizations must have a board of directors of which more than half of the members reside in such designated

community (provide a complete list of current board members with full addresses, which demonstrates that more than half of the members reside in the area in which the organization **may operate according to its certificate of incorporation is incorporated**). This documentation should be submitted with the application as **Attachment 4: Articles of Incorporation and Board List**.

Questions and Answers

Q1: On p15, the RFP states that applicants may apply to more than 1 service area, but must submit separate proposals for each. Does "service area" mean geographical region, or program area?

A1: Service area refers specifically to the 15 regions as listed in Appendix B of the RFA.

Q2:

- **Is there a timeline? The RFP states a 1-year period, is that period from July 1 2021 - June 30, 2022?**
- **Is there an anticipated (or estimated) award/contract start date for this project?**

A2: Contracts are anticipated to begin summer/early fall of 2021.

Q3: When identifying a region, do we select based on our office location, or our service delivery? Our office is in Manhattan, but the majority of our clients live in Queens and Brooklyn.

A3: Applicants may apply for any service region listed in Appendix B regardless of their organization's office location; however applicants must demonstrate they are able to assist clients in the region where they are applying

Q4: Are there any status restrictions to the immigrant populations that can be served by this grant?

A4: To be eligible for this program, immigrant candidates must have valid work authorization. ONA Job Coaches will verify work authorization as part of the recruitment and initial screening of candidates.

Q5:

- **Are organizations permitted to submit separate proposals for Part A and Part B in order to be considered for both?**
- **Can applicants submit applications for both Parts A and B? If so, can applicants be awarded for both Parts A and B?**

A5: Yes, applicants can submit applications for both Parts A and Part B, and can be awarded for both Parts A and Parts B.

Q6: Is there a page limit on the narrative questions component? Or word counts we should be mindful of for specific questions?

A6: There is no page limit or word count.

Q7: How does NYS plan to evaluate whether the employment of beneficiaries under this grant has been "directly impacted by COVID-19"? Will there be any documentation or specific criteria for this?

A7: The Professional Pathways Lead Agency and ONA Job Coaches will screen and evaluate candidates for placement in the program, including verifying the impact of COVID-19 on their employment situation. Documentation to be collected may include, but is not limited to, proof of unemployment. More direction on specific documentation will be provided at the time of the award.

Q8: How does NYS plan to verify whether participants meet household income criteria of 200% or less of Federal Poverty Guidelines? What documentation/tracking will grantees be expected to collect as back-up?

A8: Grantees are required to maintain documentation verifying the income eligibility of each candidate. This documentation can include, but is not limited to, unemployment benefits, pay stubs, and W-2s. Additional direction will be provided to grantees after award.

Q9: Do all participants served by grantees (under Part B) need to go through reskilling or upskilling? In other words, does the Part A grantee need to ensure that every single participant served by Part B grantees enrolls/completes reskilling/upskilling? Or do opportunities for reskilling/upskilling simply need to be 'made available' to all participants?

A9: The Professional Pathways Lead Agency must provide access for all participants to any necessary industry specific training courses pursuant to that participant's chosen field in accordance with RFA Section VI. 2. The training needs of each participant selected for the program will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Q10: Are placement locations flexible or do they need to align with a participant's service region? For example: If a participant from service region 'M' secures employment with an employer based in service region 'N', would there be any issue with counting that placement?

A10: The goal is for placements to be made in the specific service region of the grantee, however, if a candidate is placed outside of the service region, this would still count towards the deliverables of the grant.

Q11:

- **We have a strong local presence, yet are part of a national organization with a national Board of Directors, and therefore do not meet the requirement for more than half the members residing in our community. We have a local**

Advisory Committee composed of local business and community leaders, which in some ways functions like a Board, and chair a bimonthly roundtable representing local stakeholders serving refugees and immigrants. It would seem the reasons for requiring local board leadership would also be met through these ongoing practices. Would it be possible to adapt this Board requirement to include organizations with these types of local presence to apply?

- **Eligibility (Section III (1), p.3): The RFA requires applicants to be incorporated for the purpose of providing services or other assistance to economically or social disadvantaged persons within a designated community and requires ½ of its board to reside in that designated community. In a case where the organization's designated service area includes other states or territories, is the organization eligible to bid so long as NY State is included as a part of their larger designated service area and they maintain a principal place of business in NY State? Page 13 of the RFA contains a different requirement regarding the organization's board – stating that ½ of board members must reside in the area in which the organization is incorporated. This may be different that the organization's designated community. Which requirement controls?**

A11: In accordance with Section III of the RFA, applicants must have a board of directors of which more than half of the members reside in its designated community. The designated community means the area in which the organization may provide services or other assistance as set forth in its articles of incorporation. The designated community must include the area in which the applicant proposes to provide services through the RFA but does not have to be restricted to New York State. As shown above, the language on page 13 of the RFA has been corrected.

Q12: I'd like to confirm the employer partner requirement stating "a minimum of 2 employers per region". Does this mean we need to secure 30 unique employer partners or can we identify a certain number of employers who will commit to reviewing/considering candidates across regions? For example: If we have 5 employer partners we are working with who are committing to considering/hiring candidates across regions who are Part B recipients?

A12: Employers do not need to be unique to each region, one employer could service more than one region. However, two employers per region must be identified.

Q13: Our agency would like to do a collaborative application with another agency, but rather than splitting the ONA Job Coach position, we would like to hire two full-time Job Coaches who will be 100% dedicated to this grant, and each agency will match the ONA funds with dedicated and secured private funds. The ONA money will be used to cover 95-96% of the 2 full-time Job Coaches' salaries and fringe, and the other 5% of salaries and fringe, as well as administrative costs and necessary supplies, will be covered by the dedicated Match. Is this acceptable and are we correct in believing that this meets the definition of Job Coaches who are "100% paid by this grant"? We are considering the grant to include our private Match.

In Syracuse, both agencies feel that there are enough clients to fill the caseloads of two Job Coaches, and we can therefore exceed the minimum outcomes and provide more services to refugees as well as greater individual attention. Each collaborating agency will hire one Job Coach, who will be supervised and hosted by that agency, but the Job Coaches will work together to meet and exceed (most likely double) the project's outcomes. Reports will be prepared and submitted collaboratively. The funding could be awarded to each agency at \$50,000 each, but we are also open to choosing one agency to serve as the lead, and that agency would then subcontract 50% of the funds to the other agency. Please let us know which one is acceptable.

A13: Only one organization may apply as the lead applicant for a region, however, the selected organization may subcontract deliverables under the grant. ONA Job Coaches must be 100% dedicated to and funded by this grant. If an applicant wants to provide their own funding to hire an additional Job Coach, they must commit to providing this funding for the duration of the grant. ONA reserves the right to approve the final proposed budget and work plan for any regions funded under this grant once the organization for that region is selected. It should also be noted that matching funds are not required for this grant.

Q14: This grant seems to be supported by federal CARES act dollars which are not likely to be available after the initial funding period. Will ONA look to offer this program after the initial year through other funding sources or should proposal applicants look at this opportunity as a program that will terminate after one year with no opportunity for renewal?

A14: The contract period for all grants under this RFA is anticipated to be one year. Any additional future programming would be dependent on the availability of funds.

Q15: Will there be any penalty to providers that are unable to make their goal of enrollment of 30 qualified participants? If so will that penalty involve reduction of funds from NYS/ONA?

A15: Grantees must meet the deliverables as outlined in this grant. Support will be provided to grantees through ONA and the Professional Pathways Lead Agency to help them meet deliverables.

Q16: Lead Agency Responsibilities: Section VI of the RFA defines the responsibilities of the Part A Lead Agency.

- a. Are joint bids permitted or must there be a single lead agency?
- b. If Joint bids are not permitted, may any of the responsibilities and experience required be performed and met by the subcontracts of the Lead Agency?
- c. Are there specific criteria for the evaluation of subcontractors?
- d. Section IV B of the RFA permits subcontracting up to \$100,000 without permission of the State of New York. Do those subcontractors have to be specified in the bid? Can smaller level subcontractors also be referenced in the bid?

A16: There must be a single lead applicant, however, subcontracting is allowed with the following eligibility criteria:

- For applicants engaging subcontractors to work under this grant, the lead applicant must provide the majority of direct programming.
- All applicants intending to subcontract work under this grant should complete and execute a letter of intent with each subcontractor that specifies all services each partner agrees to provide. Letters of Intent/MOUs may be submitted with the application to substantially demonstrate capacity.
- If using a subcontractor, the applicant must be responsible for the performance of any services provided by the partners, consultants, or other organizations and must coordinate how each plans to participate.
- In addition, the subcontractor is prohibited from subcontracting funds to other recipients.

Only the lead applicant will be evaluated on their demonstrated experience and proposal to provide the majority of direct programming.

Q17: Translation and Evaluation Services: The RFA refers to both the Part A Lead Agency and the Part B ONA Job Coaches as having responsibility for providing translation and evaluation services as appropriate.

- a. Could you provide clarity on which entity (Lead Agency/Part A or Regional Agency/Part B) is required to provide which services?**
- b. Would it be sufficient to state in the bid that the Agency intends, if named the successful bidder, to engage (for example) an “ATA certified translation service” or “qualified credential evaluation service” to provide translations or credential evaluation reports without identifying in the submission the specific service providers that may be contracted?**

A17: Translation and interpretation services are allowable costs under both Part A and Part B of this grant. Per the required activities under Part A, the Professional Pathways Lead Agency will evaluate credentialing requirements for candidates selected for the program. If during the credentialing evaluation process, documentation translation is required, the Professional Pathways Lead Agency will provide this service. Per the required activities under Part B of the RFA, the ONA Job Coach will assist with other document translations for participants as needed to meet grant deliverables.

Specific translation and interpretation providers do not have to be listed in the application, however, ONA reserves the right to approve final budgets and work plans for organizations selected under Part A and Part B.