

21-RFP236

Questions and Answers

Completed by Marcie Sample, RFP Coordinator

June 8, 2021

- The following questions were submitted to the RFP Coordinator, Marcie Mills Sample during the question period of June 1 to June 4.
- There have been no revisions to the RFP as posted.

Past Evaluations:

Q: Did you work with an evaluator in the first three years of the grant? If so, are there prior evaluation reports available to review?

A: No, we have not had an external evaluator since the grant was awarded in 2017.

Q: Can WSAC identify the firm or firms with which you contracted to complete prior GEAR UP evaluations and any relevant work products that were produced under those contracts?

A: Previous studies are posted on our website, here: <https://gearup.wa.gov/about/impact>

Q: Understanding that WSAC received the GEAR UP grant in 2017, RGI Corporation has been providing program evaluation services to WSAC over the 2017 to 2021 period. If so, are they eligible to bid on this RFP?

A: We have not had an external evaluator since the grant began in 2017. Any vendor who meets the requirements set in the RFP will be considered.

Surveys:

Q: Have student and parent surveys already been developed? Have these surveys been administered in previous grant years? Will these data be available to the evaluators?

A: We administered a senior (student) exit survey in 2020 and 2021. The survey and data will be available to the evaluator.

Q: Can WSAC share a copy of the current or draft survey instruments for students and families?

A: This will be provided to the successful bidder once a contract is in place.

Data:

Q: Will the evaluator have access to previous annual reports submitted to the US Department of Education?

A: Yes, once a contract is in place all data and reports will be shared with the evaluator.

Q: Our assumption is that all analysis will be confined to GEAR UP students enrolled in GEAR UP-funded programming. Is that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Are the program objectives written for cohort students, priority students or both?

A: Both.

Q: Which year(s) of data will we have access to and for what students? For example:

- a. Would we be able to see the ways a current GEAR UP student participated in the program prior to the 2021/22 academic year? Would we be able to observe changes in outcomes, over time, within individual sites and for WAGU as a whole?
- b. Would we have access to data for students at schools that do not participate in GEAR UP in order to create a comparison group to examine the impacts of program participation?

A: All data for the full grant cycle, 2017-2024 will be available to the evaluator. WSAC receives data for all students enrolled in GEAR UP schools for the full grant cycle.

Q: Will the evaluator have access to individual student records for students participating in the GEAR UP program as well as students from nonparticipating schools?

A: We do not have data for non-participating schools.

IRB:

Q: Does the Washington State Achievement Council have IRB approval for this evaluation? Would the evaluator be responsible for securing IRB approval for the project?

A: IRB is not required for this project.

Q: Will IRB approval be required to access data in WSAC's Portal system or other data needed for this project? If so, will WSIRB be the IRB of record, or can contractors use a different, OHRP-approved IRB?

A: See above.

Cohort and Priority Models:

Q: Page 2, Section 1.1, paragraph 3. For the 1,200 students served in priority model schools can you clarify that these students will be in 7th grade in the 2021-22 school year and will be followed until the end of the grant? If these students have already started the program, what grade will they be in for the 2021-22 school year? Can you confirm that the evaluation will include both priority model schools and cohort students?

A: WSAC priority model schools serve all 7th through 12th grade students who are GEAR UP eligible each year of the grant. The total number being served in these schools is currently about 1,400 students each year. We also serve a group of cohort model schools, these students will be in 11th grade in 2021-22. There are currently about 4,100 cohort students.

Deliverables:

Q: In the list of objectives in Exhibit E (page 40-41), the 8th objective is to increase the number of GEAR UP students who place into college-level math and English without need for remediation. However, on page 42, Appendix F, enrollment in remedial courses is not listed in the data table. Will those data be available?

A: We have not resolved how this data will be collected and will work the vendor to develop a plan.

Q: How many sites will be included in the site level reports?

A: See above.

Q: The project abstract (Exhibit D, page 39) notes there are 48 WAGU schools and the Purpose and Background section (page 3, section 1.1, paragraph 2) mentioned there are 26 districts involved in the project. However, in the evaluation support section of objectives and scope of work (page 4, section 1.2.3), the RFP states that evaluators will develop feedback reports for 27 schools. Can you clarify the number of schools included in the evaluation and the number of feedback reports that the evaluator will need to prepare?

A: The number of schools changes slightly each year as we transition from middle schools to high schools, and the 48 referenced both the middle and high schools we would serve over the seven year grant cycle. In any given year, we serve about 35 schools, and some of those are within the same school district. The 27 reports requested in the RFP include:

- 13 priority school districts, 13 reports total. Three of these districts serve two schools but reports will be combined.
- 13 cohort school districts, 14 reports total due to school and school model configurations. Two districts serve two schools each and one district serves three schools. In these cases, we will combine the reports.

Q: In the RFP, is a “site” the same as a “school”? In other words, how many sites will receive a Senior Exit Survey site report? (27 or another number?)

A: Yes, “site” and “school” are interchangeable terms. See above for response regarding the number of reports.

CCREC:

Q: Can WSAC provide more details on what the support for the CCREC Data Lead described in item 1.d. may entail?

A: The Data Lead works with our IT and Research Departments to ensure the queries are completed accurately, and submits the reports to the National Student Clearinghouse. The evaluator will help to review the queries, review any data anomalies or errors and help resolve them. This will be an annual process that has been tested this year.

Q: The RFP includes a requirement to provide support to the CCREC data lead in support of their NSC submission. Can further detail be provided on the type and manner of support that would be required?

A: See above.

National Student Clearinghouse:

Q: For the data obtained through the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), will the state or the vendor be responsible for managing the contract with NSC and should the vendor include costs for the NSC data in their cost estimates?

A: CCREC manages the NSC contract for that work, and WSAC signs an MOU for the services. WSAC also maintains a contract with NSC for program level services. All costs are covered by WSAC and NCCEP and are not a part of this contract.

Q: For the data obtained through the NSC, will the state or the vendor be responsible for matching the student level data between the K12 system and the NSC systems?

If the vendor is required to complete the matching, what student level identifiers will be made available to complete the match?

A: WSAC will match the NSC reports with the student level data under the guidance of the evaluator. WSAC will submit the file to NSC for matching, and then any student level identifiers requested from

the evaluator, and available in our system, will be added to the file as needed for full analysis and tracking.

- Q: For the NSC data, will the state, NSC, or the vendor be responsible for providing the outcome variables identified (e.g. college enrollment, persistence, completion).
- A: WSAC will submit the requests to NSC and receive the reports back. The vendor may need to assist with the file creation to submit to NSC, and will be responsible for the analysis of the NSC return data.
- Q: When will the National Student Clearinghouse data be available for inclusion in summer reporting?
- A: We can submit NSC requests at any point in the year as needed for reporting. We typically submit a request during January/February to capture fall enrollment and use that data for the Annual Performance Report due in April.

Contract:

- Q: The sample contract in Exhibit C calls for invoicing to occur on a quarterly basis. Would WSAC be amenable to monthly invoicing instead?
- A: Yes, this is negotiable.
- Q: Can WSAC provide a copy of its most recent GEAR UP grant application (redacted, if need be)?
- A: This will be provided to the successful bidder once a contract is in place.
- Q: Will the awarded contract be a Firm Fixed Price contract or another type?
- A: The contract will be awarded based on the firm fixed price, payable upon completion of each deliverable.
- Q: Would the Agency accept any proposed revisions to the contract terms & conditions with the Offeror's submission?
- A: There will be a negotiation phase for the contract, and any proposed revisions will need to go through our legal advisor for consideration.
- Q: Can WSAC confirm the anticipated contract structure (e.g., time and materials, firm fixed price)?
- A: The maximum amount available is \$125,000 for one year commencing September 1, 2021. There is a maximum of three additional one-year contract periods. The contract will be a firm fixed price payable upon completion of each deliverable.

RFP Response:

- Q: Will the Washington Student Achievement Council consider relevant work samples that are included as URLs and/or those appended to the proposal?
- A: Work samples should be attached as PDFs with the response.
- Q: In the management proposal, can you provide additional detail regarding the differences between the following two sections of the proposal, as described in the RFP?
- A. Project management – subsection on Relevant Experience (page 13 of 21):
 - “Include a detail of the firm and/or individual’s experience with similar projects and related samples of work for other clients. Describe knowledge and understanding of GEAR UP program evaluation, K12 education systems, and postsecondary education preparation, enrollment, and persistence best practices and outcomes.

- B. Experience of the Bidder, the following content (page 14 of 21):
 - “A. Include other relevant experience that indicates the qualifications of the Bidder for the performance of the potential contract.”
 - “B. Include a list of contracts the Bidder has had during the last five years that relate to the Bidder’s ability to perform the services needed under this RFP. List contract reference numbers, contract period of performance, contact persons, telephone numbers, and fax numbers/e-mail addresses.”

A: Section 3.3.A relates to the organizational experience and structure of the vendor. Section 3.3.B relates to the experience of the staff who will be responsible for the project. There may be some redundancy across these two sections, depending on the size and organizational structure of the bidder.

Q: Is the Experience of the Bidder section of the Management Proposal (as described on page 14 of 21) intended to include experience of individual staff, the firm, or both? The start of the section suggests that this section is to pertain to Staff Experience/Qualifications, however there are two descriptions at the end (labeled A and B) that suggest that this section is about the bidder’s experience.

A: This section is intended to address the qualifications of the specific staff assigned to the potential contract.

Q: If the Experience of the Bidder section of the Management Proposal (as described on page 14 of 21) is intended to include experiences of the bidder’s firm, please clarify the difference between these two sections:

- A. Project management – subsection on Relevant Experience (page 13 of 21):
 - “Include a detail of the firm and/or individual’s experience with similar projects and related samples of work for other clients. Describe knowledge and understanding of GEAR UP program evaluation, K12 education systems, and postsecondary education preparation, enrollment, and persistence best practices and outcomes.
- B. Experience of the Bidder, the following content (page 14 of 21):
 - “A. Include other relevant experience that indicates the qualifications of the Bidder for the performance of the potential contract.”

A: See above.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of contracts that should be listed under the following requirement: “B. Include a list of contracts the Bidder has had during the last five years that relate to the Bidder’s ability to perform the services needed under this RFP. List contract reference numbers, contract period of performance, contact persons, telephone numbers, and fax numbers/e-mail addresses.”

A: The samples should be sufficient to demonstrate the vendor has completed similar projects, up to three total.

Q: Under the description for references, the RFP says that bidders need 3 business references for the bidder AND 3 references for the lead staff person. Is this for a total of 6 references? Or can bidders provide references that serve both functions (for a total of 3–6 references)?

A: Yes, the instructions state three business references for the bidder (the vendor) and three business references for the lead staff person. (See section 3.3 D for details.)

Q: In section 1.2, the RFP states: “Evaluation services include but are not limited to the following deliverables...” What are the other deliverables the bidders should include in the cost proposal?

A: We are open to considering additional deliverables that may be provided by the evaluator, but within the maximum cost as stated in the RFP.

Q: Is there a page limit for the proposal? Overall and or for individual sections?

A: There are no page limitations.

Q: Can monthly meetings with the WAGU Director and Associate Director be conducted virtually?

A: Yes.

Q: Does WSAC prefer evaluation services to be conducted by a locally based firm?

A: The only qualifications are those stated in the RFP.