

STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL
LEGAL NOTICE
SOLE SOURCE TRANSPARENCY POSTING

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) contemplates awarding a sole source contract to Westat Insight to conduct an in-depth, mixed methods review of the state's Passport to Careers program within a short timeline to comply with a legislative directive included in Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5187, passed in the 2023 legislative session. The Passport to Careers program helps former foster youth and unaccompanied homeless youth prepare for and succeed in college, apprenticeships, or pre-apprenticeship programs. The review will focus on 1) an exploration and evaluation of the program's implementation, 2) a rigorous analysis of student outcomes, and 3) the development of a detailed set of short- and long-term recommendations to improve the reach and effectiveness of the Passport to Careers program. This project requires a research firm that has the requisite content knowledge base in the education challenges that youth in the foster care system face and specific experience in evaluating financial aid promise programs geared towards them. This specific knowledge and experience are necessary since the project will need to start very quickly and move smoothly through the various phases of the work to meet the due date for completion and submission of the program evaluation by June 30, 2024.

Westat Insight is in a unique position to hit the ground running and move swiftly to set the various pieces of this evaluation project in motion. They have 1) highly specialized expertise in the evaluation techniques required, 2) extensive knowledge of financial aid promise programs, 3) deep understanding of the support needs of foster youth pursuing postsecondary education, and 4) experience in collaborating with WSAC on program evaluation. For these reasons, Westat Insight is the only education research and evaluation firm with the depth of knowledge and experience in all the relevant areas that will allow them to start quickly, proceed efficiently through the various steps and phases, and complete the project on schedule in a careful, thorough, and rigorous manner.

Through the knowledge and proficiency gained in the many evaluation projects Westat Insight has managed, they have developed and demonstrated the essential skills needed to perform rigorous education-related program evaluations. They also have deep knowledge of the support needs of foster youth as they navigate the education system to pursue their postsecondary goals and the data exchanges that are needed to assist them. They have conducted evaluation studies for the U.S. Department of Education on foster youth data exchange policies between state education agencies and child welfare agencies to identify implementation challenges and best practices. In addition, Westat Insight has expertise in evaluating financial aid promise programs within the specific context of Washington state through their collaboration with WSAC in an evaluation of the Seattle Promise program.

The brevity of the timeframe established by the legislature for completion of this project poses a distinct challenge. In-depth evaluations of this type, employing a mixed methods approach, are usually carried out over substantially longer periods. For this reason, Westat Insight is uniquely positioned with the necessary expertise, knowledge, and experience in all of the relevant areas to complete a rigorous evaluation in the limited time allotted.

The contract will be issued on or about September 1, 2023 and will extend through June 30, 2024. The budget for this project, as established by the state legislature, is \$150,000.

Offerors contemplating the above requirements are required to submit capability statements detailing their ability to meet the agency's requirements by 5:00 p.m. PST on August 3, 2023. Capabilities must be sufficient to begin at full speed and move swiftly through the various project phases to complete the evaluation within the short timeline and include the following:

- Specialized expertise in the program evaluation techniques that will be required for this project.
- Extensive knowledge of financial aid promise programs,
- Deep understanding of the challenges and support needs of foster youth pursuing postsecondary education.
- Familiarity with the Washington State education landscape.
- Experience in collaborating with WSAC on program evaluation.

In the absence of other qualified sources, it is the agency's intent to make a sole source award of the contract.

To submit capability statements or for questions, contact:

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