REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
For A
Customized Work Services Program
Serving Ex-Offenders

Required for use by:
CITY OF CHICAGO
(The Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development)
Issued by:
CITY OF CHICAGO
(The Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development)
ONE (1) ORIGINAL and FOUR (4) COPIES
OF THE PROPOSAL TO BE SUBMITTED

All proposals shall be submitted in sealed envelopes or packages addressed and returned to:

Amy Santacaterina
Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development
1615 West Chicago Avenue, 5th Floor
Chicago, IL 60622

The outside of the envelope or package must clearly indicate the title of this RFP and the date and time the proposal is due. The name and address of the respondent also must be clearly printed on the outside envelope or package.

PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN
4:00 P.M. CENTRAL Friday March 2, 2007

RICHARD M. DALEY
MAYOR

David Hanson
COMMISSIONER
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Overview

This RFP for a Customized Work Services Program for Ex-Offenders is composed of two components. Component One is the social service component that includes but is not limited to: recruitment, assessment, job training and other employment-related, support services for ex-offenders. Component Two is the customized work services component that describes CITY OF CHICAGO work service projects. These work services projects are administered under the following city departments: Department of General Services, Department of Fleet Management, Department of Streets and Sanitation and the Department of Water Management. Each of these work services projects is different in scope; from hydrant painting to grounds maintenance, therefore, the scope of services will be different for each project. Respondents must respond to the social service scope and to at least one of the proposed work services projects scopes. As described in this RFP, MOWD deems both components of the program to be equally important to the success of the program and seeks proposals that reflect this determination. A Respondent may submit a proposal for one or more of the work services projects in the RFP.

Given the two components of this RFP, for clarity the RFP is organized into three sections.

Section I: The project’s background, overview, social service scope of services.

Section II: The work services projects, including the scope of services for each project and the requirements that each department mandates to complete these tasks.

Section III: The contents of responses, evaluation and selection and general submission information.
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Section I

A. BACKGROUND

Prisoner reentry is a serious safety and policy challenge facing the City of Chicago. In 2005, more than 21,000 inmates were released from state prison and returned to Chicago neighborhoods. Less than half have a high school education, 75 percent have been in prison before, only 14 percent have a job lined up after their release, and more than half will be re-incarcerated again within three years. Reversing these statistics and reducing recidivism has a direct impact on the security and stability of all our neighborhoods. So developing ways to increase the chances of successful reentry and simultaneously enhance public safety overall is a pressing issue.

According to many individuals with a criminal record, finding gainful employment is a primary concern and can have a significant impact on whether they remain crime-free. As the final report of the Mayoral Policy Caucus on Prisoner Reentry points out, “Though the concerns and needs of formerly incarcerated individuals are complex, gainful employment can become the single most critical factor in determining what direction an individual’s reentry process will take.”

In order to address this need, the City of Chicago intends to assist this population by providing opportunities for training, employment and social services. Thus, the Mayor’s Office of Workforce Development (MOWD) in cooperation with the Department of Fleet Management, Department of General Services, Department of Streets and Sanitation and the Department of Water Management is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Customized Work Services Program for Ex-Offenders.

B. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Customized Work Services Program combines elements of a transitional jobs program (TJP) with various City of Chicago work services projects. Transitional jobs are temporary jobs that combine real work activities, skill development and supportive services to help participants overcome substantial barriers to employment. Transitional jobs help persons with criminal records break negative life patterns and engage in positive steps to re-entering the community as responsible, productive citizens. By rapidly attaching ex-offenders to real work activities, the chances of recidivism are significantly reduced.

The Customized Work Services Program will use City of Chicago work services projects as the real work experience component of the TJP. Respondents can select from one or more of the following work services projects:

1. Grounds Maintenance, Snow Removal, and De-icing for City Properties
2. Small Engine Repairs
3. Fire Hydrant Painting
4. Grounds Maintenance, Tree Pit Maintenance and Tree Trimming
In accordance with a Grant(s) awarded pursuant to this RFP, Respondents will manage work crew(s) composed of several participants in the instruction, execution and completion of the projects. Respondent(s) will assign a full time supervisor to ensure successful completion of the work services projects and to train participants in appropriate work behaviors and skills. Participants will be reimbursed by the Respondent at a minimum of $7.00/hour or the current minimum wage for their time engaged in work activity.

This unique design will afford ex-offenders opportunities to gain skills, work experience and earn wages by participating on beautification, grounds maintenance and engine repair projects throughout the Chicago area. It will help to enhance city neighborhoods by completing important community services projects. Additionally, the increase in work opportunities for these hard-to-employ individuals reduces the pressure on local emergency systems. It also provides program participants with structure, self-esteem and income that they can now spend on local goods and services. Finally, local economic development efforts are bolstered by the overall improvement in the quality of the local workforce.

All Respondents awarded grants through this RFP must develop a work training and placement program serving persons with felony convictions. Through the Respondent’s administration of a program of immediate paid work assignments on City of Chicago projects coupled with case management, job readiness and basic skills training, participants can gain valuable skills and experience needed to obtain steady unsubsidized employment. It is MOWD’s belief that this unique program design will facilitate the ultimate goal of full time job placement and retention and considers both the social service and work services components to be equally important. Critical elements of the proposal must include: (1) a description of wrap-around social services for the ex-offender (2) strategies for assisting ex-offenders in securing full time employment; (3) strategies for job development; and (4) strategies for completing the specific work services projects.

C. ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS

MOWD seeks proposals that demonstrate Respondent’s ability to manage a comprehensive job training and placement program for ex-offenders and an ability to complete work services project tasks in accordance with the specifications.

Eligible Respondents must meet the following criteria:

- Be eligible to do business with the City of Chicago;
- Have a business location within the City of Chicago; and
- Demonstrate comparable experience to perform tasks as delineated and described herein

Collaborations are encouraged especially between non-profits and for-profits that have had previous partnerships. MOWD encourages the development of strategic collaborations to respond to the unique needs of the targeted population and the specific work service projects. Therefore, any collaboration of two or more entities must clearly provide the following information in the narrative portions of the RFP:

- Must have one partner with a business location in the City of Chicago
- Identify the lead agency for the collaborative partnership
• State the roles and responsibilities of each collaborator and how long the collaboration has been in existence
• Include an organizational chart for each organization and for the collaboration
• Describe how funds will flow within the collaboration
• Identify the qualified fiscal agent for the collaborative partnership

Service providers that are selected will become members of Mayor Daley’s WorkNet Chicago, which is the term that describes all entities funded by MOWD to provide workforce development services.

Entities are or may be ineligible if they are currently barred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by a Federal, State or other governmental departments/agencies, or if they are not in compliance with the State Department of Revenue or Internal Revenue Service.

D. ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

Eligible participants must be adults residing in the City of Chicago who are at least 21 years old with prior felony convictions, who were not incarcerated for sex offenses or violent crimes, and were not incarcerated for more than 15 consecutive years. All participants in the program must be unemployed or underemployed ex-offenders.

E. PROGRAM DESIGN—SCOPE OF SERVICES

The City of Chicago expects program innovation and requires that the Respondent(s) provide close management and execution of work services projects. The Respondent’s design elements of the program should reflect the Respondent’s ingenuity and experience. The following programmatic scope of service must be provided for each work services project selected.

The selected Respondent(s) will provide participants with a customized job-training program designed to provide the participant with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the demands of the work services projects. The Respondent will also provide intensive one-on-one support for participants to resolve barriers to longer-term employment. In addition to work experience, the Respondent(s) must also provide professional development services to the participants. Professional development services may include workshops on problem solving, communication skills, workplace literacy, financial literacy and job interview training. Respondent(s) will have the flexibility to schedule professional development hours and work experience hours to meet their proposed work services project.

The combined work and training hours must enable the participant to meet all appropriate participation requirements such as meetings with parole officers and or counseling appointments. It is anticipated that participants may cycle in and out of the work experience program and into longer-term full time, unsubsidized employment. MOWD envisions the social services component of the work training program design to follow the typical workforce development customer flow with some exceptions.
MOWD expects each Respondent to be able to deliver the following:

**Participant Recruitment:** The Respondent(s) can recruit participants from a variety of sources, such as parole officers, work release centers and other community-based organizations as long as the participants meet program eligibility requirements and have been unable to find employment and are currently unemployed or underemployed.

**Assessment:** Respondent(s) must institute program services that begin with an initial screening and drug testing, followed by a review of program requirements. Participants testing positively for drugs may not participate on a work services project. Respondents are expected to connect those who fail drug testing to appropriate drug treatment and intervention services. Individuals who complete drug treatment programs may return for acceptance to the program. Respondents must re-test individuals who failed their initial drug test and subsequently completed drug treatment programs to confirm that the individuals test negatively for drugs before allowing participation on any work services project.

In addition, Respondent(s) should assess participants in the areas of academic skills, vocational skill development, employment experience, and vocational goals and interests. Respondent(s) should use the assessment to assist the participants in their development of both short-term employment goals and long-range career plans.

**On-the-Job Supervision:** Most workforce development models feature a “train and place” service sequence. This model features a “place and train” sequence which has been proven more effective with hard-to-employ populations. Respondent(s) will place participants on work crews and will designate a supervisor or job coach to provide immediate on-the-job instruction of work skills and habits to participants. Full time supervision by Respondent(s) while participants complete work services projects is critical. In addition to providing instruction and supervision, the supervisor must ensure successful execution and completion of the work services projects.

**Case Management:** Respondent(s) will assign a case manager to each participant. This case manager will provide vocational counseling, arrange for supportive services, and monitor participant progress toward the obtainment of more long-term competitive employment. Depending on the size of the Grant and structure, the case manager may also be a job coach supervisor.

The Respondent must provide intensive case management, job search and job readiness training, job placement, follow up service and tracking at 30, 90 and 180 day intervals. Intensive case management includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Frequent contact and monitoring of participants’ progress
- Timely assessment, intervention and referrals as appropriate, for identified issues and barriers to program participation and employment
- Regular and timely contact with the referring case manager regarding participants’ participation and progress
- Maintaining detailed participant case files including: participant attendance records; payroll records; assessment results used for barrier identification/removal; completed resume; current status of participant in program; employment verification; and work progression plan, as applicable, detailing participation requirements and expected goals of the participant in the program.
Supportive Services: The Respondent(s) will provide participants with public transit passes to and from the work assignment for a minimum of the first two weeks of the program, retrieval of identification documents, and work related uniforms or equipment.

Job Seeking Skills Training: The Respondent(s) will train participants on skills such as but not limited to: interviewing, resume writing, application writing and job search strategies.

Job Placement Assistance: The Respondent(s) is responsible for assisting participants in securing unsubsidized employment beyond the work services projects.

Post-Employment Follow Up: Ongoing follow up with the participants will be provided by the Respondent to ensure successful re-integration into the community and retention of stable employment.

Retention milestones for ninety (90) and one hundred eighty (180) days of unsubsidized employment may be achieved with multiple employers, provided that the gaps between employment are less than 30 days duration. The Respondent(s) will make available to MOWD comprehensive reports/records that include but are not limited to the following elements on a monthly basis or as needed by MOWD:

- Names and social security numbers of eligible participants
- Reports that document and support attendance, progress and placement outcomes
- All unsubsidized employment information including job title, start dates, hours to be worked, benefits, and starting wage as verified by the employer.
- Retention information verifying employment at 30 days, 90 days, and 180 days.
- The names of the participants who have been terminated along with a report outlining the services received by the participant and the reason for termination.

The following points summarize the responsibilities of the Respondent:

- Develop, implement and maintain effective management of the overall program and supervision of the work services project(s)
- Ensure completion of the work services project(s) to the satisfaction of the relevant City of Chicago departments
- Administer participant payroll and taxes in a timely, efficient manner and in compliance with applicable federal, state and local law, including Fair Labor Standards Act
- Comply with all required insurance coverage, i.e., workers compensation
- Provide vocational and job readiness training options for all program participants
- Maintain an accounting system and supporting fiscal records (i.e. time cards) adequate to enable MOWD to audit and otherwise verify all payments made
- Attend periodic meetings to ensure continuity of service delivery and effective program management
- Submit monthly reports regarding number of participants served, placements, retentions and ward data
- Submit any and all reports required by the cooperating City department
- Maintain effective communication with MOWD and cooperating City department representatives.
Section II

A. WORK SERVICES PROJECTS—SCOPE OF SERVICES

The guiding philosophy of this program is that work is beneficial and the best way to learn how to work is through actual paid work. The City of Chicago has identified the following work services projects that can be used for the work activity component of the program. Respondents may respond to one or more of following projects.

1. Department of General Services: Grounds Maintenance, Snow Removal, and De-icing for City Properties
2. Department of Fleet Management: Small Engine Repairs
3. Department of Water Management: Fire Hydrant Painting
4. Department of Streets and Sanitation: Grounds Maintenance, Tree Pit Maintenance and Tree Trimming

The following section outlines the Scope of Service to be followed for each work services project: