

# **THE CHICAGO COOK WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP**

LOCAL WORKFORCE INNOVATION AREA #7

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY ACT**

**PUBLIC INPUT SOUGHT-REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**



**CHICAGO COOK WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP  
1 N. DEARBORN ST. - SUITE 750  
CHICAGO, IL 60602**

**RESPONSES DUE:**

**Monday, April 20, 2026 - by or before 4:00 pm\*(CT)**

**\*Under no circumstances will proposals be accepted after 4:00pm**

**Completed RFI responses must be submitted electronically to:**

[https://fs21.formsite.com/Workforce\\_Partnership/busw51y2d8/index](https://fs21.formsite.com/Workforce_Partnership/busw51y2d8/index)

**George Wright, CEO  
The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership**

**Jacki Robinson-Ivy, Chair  
Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board**

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## **Section I. Purpose of Request for Information**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) is seeking input to inform the development of a centralized Business Hub (Hub) similar to a Center of Excellence, which will serve as the primary employer-facing entity for the regional workforce system (LWIA 7).

The Hub is intended to:

- Serve as a single point of entry for employers;
- Coordinate employer engagement across the system, eliminating duplication;
- Drive demand-driven talent pipelines aligned to industry needs;
- Establish consistent standards, data practices, and performance expectations; and
- Strengthen alignment between workforce, economic development, and training partners.

This Request for Information (RFI) will inform the design of a future Request for Proposal (RFP) to procure an operator responsible for managing this centralized model.

## **Section II. Background**

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is an umbrella organization operating the public workforce system in the City of Chicago and Cook County. Largely funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), The Partnership combines federal, state, local and philanthropic resources to broaden the reach and impact of workforce development services for regional employers and career-seekers. The Partnership has programmatic and administrative responsibility for all WIOA services provided in Chicago and Cook County (Local Workforce Investment Area 7, hereinafter LWIA 7). The Partnership administers a comprehensive workforce development system with multiple entry points throughout Chicago and suburban Cook County where career seekers and businesses can access the full range of available services and benefits with a network which comprises [approximately 70 community-based delegate agencies](#), sector-based training providers, career pathway programs, and industry-focused sector centers, including 11 American Job Centers (AJCs).

## **Section III: Scope & Objective**

To ensure the program model meets the best needs of employers, Chicago and and Cook County, this request for public information seeks stakeholder input to define the structure, functions, and requirements of a centralized business center/hub (Hub) funded by WIOA through The Partnership. The Partnership is seeking information from stakeholders on:

- The expectations and role of a business-facing service model;
- Characteristics and qualifications of a business facing provider;
- Ways to integrate and cooperate with the network;
- Deliverables from a business-facing provider;
- Technological capabilities to best serve business employers;
- Sector strategies for serving businesses; and
- Overall feedback.

Please note that the RFI is not an application for the program. There will be a future RFP released, after which applicants can compete through a competitive process to receive a grant award. Responding to the RFI is not a prerequisite to participating in a future RFP process and does not obligate The Partnership to conduct a future RFP based on the responses received. Further, responding to the RFI does not provide any advantages to the respondent in any potential future RFPs. All information obtained in response to the RFI will be made available for public review and may be used by The Partnership to inform you of the implementation of a business-facing center funded through WIOA.

#### **Section IV: Current WIOA Program Model Descriptions**

Our current WIOA-funded workforce network features five program models designed to work together to provide the most effective service for our customers. This collaborative system includes multiple entry points for both businesses and career seekers to access the full range of workforce development services and benefits.

- ***Comprehensive American Job Centers:*** These AJCs provide a full array of employment and training related services for workers, youth, and businesses. These locations include the mandatory Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners on-site, such as Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Veterans services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and more.
- ***Affiliate American Job Centers:*** These AJCs provide more limited, but still extensive, employment and training related services for workers, youth, and businesses than the Comprehensive AJCs. These locations do not include all the mandatory Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners (i.e., Veterans, Vocational Rehabilitation, IDES) on-site.
- ***Affiliate Youth-Only American Job Centers:*** These AJCs provide career and educational services to in and out of school youth. These sites may not have public resource rooms or job readiness workshops.
- ***Specialized American Job Centers and Sector Centers:*** These AJCs focus on serving specific needs, such as those of dislocated workers (those who have lost their jobs), youth, or key industry sectors, and may not offer all the services of a Comprehensive or Affiliate AJC.
- ***Career Centers*** do not receive WIOA funding. They offer programs and services tied to specific programs funded by other private or public sector partners.

**Organizations funded through each of the program models provide some level of the following business services under their respective grant agreements:**

- Outreach to and develop relationships with small, medium, and large employers.
- Provide labor market information to employers, sectors, and their regional workforce economic landscape.
- Plan and host targeted hiring events including sector-based, employer-specific, or Partnership-led initiatives.
- Develop and post job orders for WIOA participants through the system's designated business services job order platform.

- Screen and prepare candidates based on employer requirements to improve quality of hire and retention.
- Place participants into employment and follow up with employers;
- Assess and survey employers on current and future labor needs;
- Facilitate work-based learning opportunities with employers such as On-the-Job Training, Customized Training, Incumbent Worker Training, and Registered Apprenticeships;
- Provide employers with information on tax credits and other resources; and
- Engage with and align training providers, educational partners, and community organizations to develop talent pipelines. Work aligned with other Partnership agency partners and American Job Centers to coordinate recruitment, training, and placement strategies for the system.

The Hub is not intended to replace service delivery roles of AJCs or community-based organizations, but rather to coordinate, align, and strengthen employer engagement across the system.

## **Section V: Questions**

All interested parties are encouraged to respond to any questions to which they can provide meaningful input. Responses should not include confidential or proprietary information. All feedback will be posted on The Partnership [website](#). Please respond as concisely as possible.

### **1. Vision & Role of the Business Hub**

**What should a centralized Hub achieve within the workforce system, and what key problems should it solve?**

In your response, describe:

- The ideal role of the Hub in supporting employers.
- The specific gaps or inefficiencies in the current system.
- How specific functions and metrics should be centralized, shared, or delivered by agency?
- What workforce system deliverables would the Hub be accountable for?
- Should the Hub model be focused by sector, geography, hybrid, or function?
- Which functions should be centralized versus remaining with local providers?

**2. How should the Hub coordinate with economic development entities (e.g., World Business Chicago, Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, municipal agencies) on business attraction, retention, and expansion including company relocations to or expanding within Chicago and Cook County?**

In your response, describe:

- Whether the Hub should be directly involved when companies are considering relocating to or expanding within Chicago and Cook County?
- How can workforce services be positioned to attract employers?

### **3. Service Model & System Integration**

**What level of authority should the Hub strive for in driving system alignment and employer service delivery?**

In your response, describe:

- Whether the Hub should directly deliver services, coordinate partners, or both?

- Should the Hub have authority to assign employer accounts, set service standards, require delegate agencies to use centralized systems?
- What should the minimum level of interaction be between the Hub and American Job Centers, community-based organizations, partner organizations, and training providers?
- Describe what the core functions should be for the Hub.
- Identify strategies to support small versus large businesses?
- How to prevent duplication of employer outreach and improve system alignment?

#### **4. Employer Engagement & Industry Strategy**

**How should the workforce system build strong, long-term relationships with employers and align services to industry demand?**

In your response, describe:

- What specific strategies can be implemented to convert an employer from a one-time user to a long-time partner?
- How to identify and prioritize high-demand industries and employers?
- What role should employers play in designing training and hiring pipelines?
- How should employer satisfaction and engagement be measured?

#### **5. Talent Pipelines & Work-Based Learning**

**What role should the Hub play in standardizing talent pipelines and expanding work-based learning opportunities?**

In your response, describe:

- The Hub's role in apprenticeships, on-the-job training (OJT), internships, apprenticeships, and other models.
- How to scale these opportunities across the system?
- How to align training providers and employers to create effective pipelines?

#### **6. Data, Technology, & Performance**

**What data systems, technology, and performance measures are needed to support an effective Hub?**

In your response, describe:

- Key data points and systems needed to track employer engagement and outcomes.
- How technology (including automation of Artificial Intelligence (AI), if applicable) could improve coordination and matching?
- What are the top KPIs the hub should be held accountable for?
- How should performance be tied to funding or incentives?

#### **7. Implementation, Risks & Operator Qualifications**

**What factors are critical to successfully implementing a centralized Hub?**

In your response, describe:

- Key risks or challenges to avoid.
- What capabilities versus experience in employer engagement, system coordination, and funder reporting are needed for the organization in operating the Hub?
- Any recommendations for transitioning with minimal disruption to the current model?
- Additional comments or feedback.

## **Section VI. Electronic Submission Procedures**

RFI responses must be submitted electronically through the official online submission form by the stated deadline. Paper (hard copy), email, and facsimile submissions will not be accepted, and late submissions will not be reviewed.

Upon successful submission, applicants will receive an email confirmation, a PDF copy of their submission, and a unique submission ID. Submissions cannot be edited once submitted; applicants are responsible for ensuring accuracy, completeness, and timely submission and for addressing any technical issues prior to the deadline.

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**No later than Monday, April 20, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. CDST.**

Responses received after this date and time are late and will not be accepted.