REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
EVALUATOR SERVICES

VENANGO COUNTY, AS FISCAL AGENT FOR NORTHWEST WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA
1174 ELK STREET
FRANKLIN, PA 16323
(814) 432-9503

Interested qualified evaluators are invited to submit a sealed proposal for evaluation services, in accordance with the specifications contained in the attached.

Proposals must be received at the Courthouse Annex Building, c/o Denise Jones, 1174 Elk Street, Franklin, PA by 4:00 PM, prevailing time, on Friday, December 19, 2014. The proposal must be signed by an official authorized to bind the bidder, and it will contain a statement to the effect that the proposal is firm for a period of at least 90 days from the date of receipt. Proposals must be submitted in accordance with the specifications outlined in the Proposal Requirements section of the RFP, *with proper identification of subject proposed on the outside of the envelope*. Proposals will be opened at 10:00 AM, prevailing time, or shortly thereafter, on Monday, December 22, 2014. Award of the contract for evaluation services shall be made at public meeting of the Venango County Board of Commissioners as Fiscal Agent for the Northwest Workforce Investment Area, to be held in the Courthouse Annex Building, 1174 Elk Street, Franklin PA.

The Venango County Board of Commissioners reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and to waive any defects or irregularities in the best interest of the Northwest Workforce Investment Area. Requests for any information concerning this solicitation are to be referred to:

Diona L. Brick
Administrator, Finance and Management Services
Courthouse Annex Building
1174 Elk Street
Franklin, PA 16323
(814) 432-9503
dbrick@co.venango.pa.us

REQUEST FOR EVALUATORS PROPOSAL

INSTRUCTIONS TO PROPOSERS

A. Proposers may submit questions concerning this Request for Proposal (RFP) in writing to Diona Brick no later than 4:00 PM on December 12, 2014. Written questions and answers shall become public record and will be shared with all proposers who have received RFPs. After submission of proposals and closing thereof, no information will be furnished until an award has been made.

B. A total of three (3) copies of each proposal in a sealed package are required. Proper identification of subject proposed must be clearly marked on the outside of the package.

C. Hand delivered proposals must be delivered to Denise Jones, County Administrator, in the Commissioner's office located in the Courthouse Annex before the time set forth above for receipt of proposals.

D. Each proposal must disclose the proposer's technical approach in as much detail as possible, including but not limited to, the requirement specified in the Technical Proposal Requirements section of this RFP.

E. The County reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposals submitted. Therefore, the proposal should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms from both a price and technical standpoint. The County also reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received. It is understood that all proposals submitted will become a part of the official file on this matter without obligation to the County, and that all proposals and attachments shall become public record upon their receipt by the County.

F. The County reserves the right to conduct pre-contract negotiations with any or all proposers.

G. Any proposal received after the time specified for receipt will not be considered.

H. Proposals may be withdrawn or modified in person by a Proposer or his/her authorized representative, provided his/her identity is made known and he/she signs a receipt for the proposal, before the time proposals must be received as stated previously in this RFP.

I. The County will not be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of proposals.

J. The submission of this proposal shall be prima facie evidence that the proposer has full knowledge of the scope, nature, quantity, and quality of the work to be performed, the detailed requirements of the specifications, and the conditions under which the work is to be performed.

K. Each proposer shall be expected to furnish the County with additional information as may be reasonably required.

L. The County will not be responsible for any costs not included in the proposal and subsequent contracted-for costs.

SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

The Northwest Workforce Investment Area was awarded a Workforce Innovation Grant. The purpose of this RFP is to obtain a high-quality independent evaluator to review the program's effect on participant and system-wide outcomes. Please see the Project Narrative for further details on the training project. The successful firm will provide evaluation of the project as outlined.

A. Proposal Structure and Project Design

Bidders shall include information about the three main parts of the evaluation as follows:

1 – Pre-post Outcomes Study – Note that this should answer the primary research question.

2 – Implementation Study – This should answer the two main objectives.

3 – Cost Allocation Analysis – This should analyze the cost per participant for the subgroups.

Bidders should refer to the Project Narrative (Appendix C) to fully understand the goals and objectives. Bidders are also required to prepare a preliminary plan which is expected to be refined and adjusted by the evaluator in conjunction with the project staff. (Please see Appendix F for Description of Evaluation Plan) In addition, bidders should refer to the Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) at http://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/SGA-DFA-PY-13-06.pdf for a full understanding of what is expected with regard to this project.

It is absolutely crucial that the bidders understand the required timeline (Please see Appendix D). The bidders **must** meet each of the defined deadlines. In conjunction with this, the successful bidder will be working very closely with the National Evaluation Coordinator (NEC). (Please see Appendix E) The project may not move from Phase I to Phase II until the Final Evaluation Design Report is submitted and the Department of Labor (DOL) and determination is given.

B. Statement of Work

Bidders are required to prepare a statement of work to include the plan to carry out deliverables as outlined:

- Develop an interim evaluation design report to be delivered to the Northwest Workforce Investment Area no later than April 15, 2015. This should include refining the logic model, helping the grantee refine evaluation plans in terms of what program components to evaluate, identify research questions, identify outcomes, conduct a literature review, and specify research methodology.
- Conduct data collection as appropriate.
- Analyze the data collected.
- Preparing, distributing, and discussing appropriate reports.
- Consult with the grantee as necessary.
- Consult with the NEC to ensure that all requirements are met as well as solicit any needed assistance.
- Submit monthly progress reports to the grantee no later than the 15th of the following month.

As with all of the deliverables outlined above, a description of what is required may be accessed by reviewing the SGA.

C. Cost and Pricing Data

Bidders are required, **at a minimum**, to submit cost proposals fully supported by cost and pricing data adequate to establish the reasonableness of the overall bid.

Proposers are required to certify their pricing will be valid for a period of Ninety (90) days from the date of the Proposal. Failure to provide the Agreement will result in rejection of a proposal as non-compliant. (Appendix B)

D. Unacceptable Work

The Agreement may be canceled at any time upon ninety (90) days written notice by either party without cause. However, if the

Contractor fails to comply with any of the terms specified in this Article, the County may terminate this contract without notice.

E. Length of Contract

This Contract will span the length of the grant period October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015 and the firm will be retained for the period October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2019 should all terms be met and the project moves from Phase I to Phase II under the Workforce Innovation Grant.

F. Debarment

Proposer certifies that neither it nor any of its employees or affiliates providing services hereunder currently under suspension or debarment by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or the Federal Government. Proposer shall not enter into any subcontract for any work under this contract with any subcontractor who is currently suspended or debarred by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or the Federal Government. A list of suspended and debarred individuals or contractors may be obtained by contacting the following: Department of General Services, Office of Chief Counsel, 603 North Office Building, Harrisburg, PA 17125; Phone: 717-763-7472, and Fax: 717-787-9138.

G. EEO Compliance

Proposer agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment on account of race, age, color, sex, religious creed, national origin, marital status, handicap or sexual orientation. Proposer shall comply with the Contract Compliance Regulations of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, any pertinent Executive Order of the Governor and all State and Federal Laws prohibiting discrimination in hiring or employment opportunities. Proposer further agrees, in the performance of this Agreement, to comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

H. Anti-Collusion

Proposer agrees not to discuss or compare this proposal with any other proposer and have not colluded with any proposer in the preparation of this proposal in order to gain an unfair advantage in the award of this proposal.

PROPOSAL REQUIRMENTS

A. For ease of comparison, each Proposal shall be organized in the following manner. Proposers are encouraged to tab sections for ease of review.

1. **Summary Cover Sheet** - to include the name of the firm, address of the firm, name, telephone number, and title of person with authority to commit the firm, name, telephone number, and title of contact person, if different than above, and the date of submission.

2. **Table of Contents**

3. **Letter of Transmittal** - A brief letter (1-2 pages) to introduce the firm to the County. It should briefly state the firm understands of the scope of service required and the proposer's commitment to accomplish the work within specific time frames.

4. **Profile of Proposer** - Submit a detailed description of the firm, including founding/incorporation dates, years of experience, specialties, etc. State the location of the office from which the work is to be done.

5. **Qualifications and Experience** - Identify qualified staff who would work on the project, along with an organizational chart that indicates the reporting relationships of that personnel. Provide biographies of key personnel that include education and a complete professional history including duration of term in present position, current responsibilities, and experience with evaluation services. Biographies may be included as an appendix.

   Describe recent evaluation experience similar to the type requested.

6. **Scope of Work/Statement of Work** – Describe in full the scope of services to be provided to show the Proposers technical understanding of the work to be done and the approach to the project. The successful proposer shall familiarize themselves with and comply with the provisions of any and all federal and state requirements, and rules and regulations that may pertain to the work required under this engagement.

7. **References** - Provide a client list of three (3) similar engagements, performed during the past three years. The client list should include the name, address, title, and telephone number of the person providing the reference so that he/she can be contacted.

8. **Professional Liability Insurance** - Each proposer must provide proof of professional liability insurance coverage. The minimum coverage requirement is $1,000,000 per occurrence.

9. **Fees and Contracts** - Provide estimated hours, by type of professional, hourly cost of each type of professional, and the total estimated cost. Each proposer must state at a minimum a guaranteed, not-to-exceed price for the full time period of the engagement and the amount payable for each year.

B. Proposals that do not meet all the above requirements of this RFP will be rejected as non-responsive. Without each item required an adequate analysis and comparison of proposals is impossible.

SELECTION CRITERIA

A. **Qualifications and Experience** - Will be judged on the proposer's technical experience and on the proposed evaluator team's experience and professional education. The education and technical experience of the Principal assigned to the project will be highly weighted. These criteria will also include a review of the proposer's past performance with regard to the amount of evaluation services performed.

B. **Understanding of Project & Requirements** – Evaluation of the proposer's responsiveness in clearly stating an understanding of the work to be performed.

C. **Evaluator Independence** – Evaluation of the potential conflicts and the ability of the proposer to be an independent third party and assess the program and its effects on participants objectively.

D. **Capacity and Resources** - Proposers will be evaluated on the specialized knowledge that they possess and the proposed evaluation team of sufficient size to adequately carry out the tasks for this evaluation design.

E. **Cost** - All proposals meeting the above criteria will be ranked according to the least total cost. The cost must be all-inclusive.

APPENDIX A

ENGAGEMENT FEES:

	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Evaluation Services					
Totals					

FEES FOR HOURLY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: (TYPE)	Hourly Rate	Estimated Hours	Total Cost (col. 1 X col. 2)
Total			

APPENDIX B

I hereby certify that the pricing provided in the enclosed Proposal shall be valid for a period of Ninety (90) days from the date of said Proposal.

By:____________________________________

Printed:________________________________

Title:__________________________________

Firm:__________________________________

APPENDIX A

ENGAGEMENT FEES:

	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Evaluation Services					
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FEES FOR HOURLY PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: (TYPE)	Hourly Rate	Estimated Hours	Total Cost (col. 1 X col. 2)
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Printed:______________________________

Title:_______________________________

Firm:_______________________________

PROJECT NARRATIVE

a) Statement of Need

The Northwest Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Area includes six counties: Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Venango and Warren. Erie County (containing Pennsylvania's fourth largest city) comprises approximately 50% of this area's workforce and employers. The Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs) in Northwest PA recently took steps to improve the local workforce system by naming Venango County as its WIA fiscal agent and revitalizing the WIB with new members. The CLEOs and WIB members are working together to identify cost efficiencies, partnerships and training opportunities that enhance the workforce and retain and expand regional businesses. This WIF initiative will help the CLEOs and WIB test system-wide changes to expand partnerships to utilize limited resources more effectively. Barriers include:

- Skill gaps between post-secondary training offerings and employer needs
- Lack of flexibility in training/retraining workers.
- Too many funding silos; not enough partnership.
- Job seekers with barriers get stuck at WIA Core Service level, while social service agencies offering case management and support are not networked with the PA CareerLink system.

Problem 1: The region is rich in colleges, universities, and other accredited post-secondary schools, yet employers find that graduates are not sufficiently trained for their entry level, high priority jobs. There is no community college to bring low-cost, flexible training to meet the changing demands of the labor market; efforts to bring a viable community college in the region have met with little success to date. The region also has a network of Career and Technical Centers operating secondary education and limited evening adult classes, and a network of Higher Education Councils bringing college coursework and training to rural areas. While represented on the WIB, educational systems remain in silos with little meaningful partnership in adult training.

Problem 2: Employers in Industry Partnerships identify training needs for incumbent workers and offer classes jointly to upgrade employee skills. Often IP employers training is postponed or cancelled because they cannot fill enough slots to be cost effective. A Certified Production Technician (CPT) Course has been postponed three times for incumbent workers this year in Erie, because no WIA-funded job seekers can be referred. What is worse, the employers would immediately hire job seekers who successfully completed this class. Because these are not established courses, the training is not approved for WIA Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). WIA customized training funds could be used to run combined classroom training, but this is not being done because services for incumbent workers and unemployed adults remain siloed. This not only hinders retraining of incumbent workers, but also prevents unemployed workers from benefiting from quicker skill upgrades to put them into the pipeline to new careers.

Problem 3: Local recipients of Title II Adult Basic Literacy Education in the Northwest PA region experienced severe cuts during the last statewide competitive RFP process; the region lost more than $1.5 million in annual funding. At a time when ABLE programs were becoming more aligned with workforce training through Career Pathways education, regional ABLE partners could no longer afford to offer classes in CareerLinks.

Problem 4: Perhaps the "80-20 rule"--20% use 80% of resources—can illustrate the inefficiency of productive usage of staff time in the PA CareerLink system. Job seekers generally fall into three (3) categories:

1. *Job seekers with specialized degrees or training and/or transferrable skills who are Internet savvy and use social media for job hunting.*

2. *Job Seekers with a work history who are in transition, such as dislocated workers or persons reentering the labor force.*

3. *Job Seekers lacking a job history, long-term unemployed, or others with one or more barriers to employment.* This group includes out-of-school youth and adults without a stable work history, and with at least one serious barrier to employment, documented by regional WIA staff. These job seekers require the most staff time and often end up leaving the CareerLink jobless as there are no current collaborations in place to address their multiple barriers. ***This is the target group for the innovations proposed through this WIF grant.***

b) Strategic Approach

i. Project Outcome Goals

This WIF grant will enroll 300 participants seeking full-time employment during the three year grant period. Outcomes to be tracked and validated are listed below:

Job Seekers

- 90% of WIF participants will attain at least 1 career enhancing Credential/ Certificate.
- WIF cohort groups will meet or exceed common measures indicators of their regular WIA adult, youth and dislocated workers cohorts in entered employment, retention and wage gains during the grant period.
- 70% of participants will secure related employment within 90 days of completion of training module(s) identified in their Individual Employment Plans (IEPs).
- 70% will achieve 12 month retention and will no longer need TANF or UC benefits.

Employers

- 20 new businesses will join, or rejoin, Industry Partnerships as a result of the changes in training delivery.

- Employers will report better job retention of employees trained through WIF.
- Employers will report cost savings due to reduced training costs and less turnover.

Greater Efficiencies and Stronger Collaborations to be Tested

- PA CareerLink staff can spend more time providing intensive services if clients with barriers can receive intensive case management through other community resources and be referred back when job ready.
- Training duplication is eliminated by offering employer recognized credential programs for combined classes of incumbent workers and WIA eligible job seekers, with funding following the participant eligibility.
- Because modular, stackable training can be done in classes, and the number of training modules will vary by participant and job orders, the average cost of this training will be comparable to costs of an average On-the Job Training slot and less than an Individual Training Account ($5,000 maximum).

ii. Project Type and Strategic Approach

This Project is developed as **Type A.** The Project proposes to achieve:

1. Better results for job seekers and employers by
   - developing short term, modular training with "stackable credentials" by industry with employer input and to their specifications
   - utilizing expertise of ABLE providers, public Career and Technical Centers and Higher Education Councils in curriculum development and implementation
   - offering a nationally recognized work readiness program called Work Certified™ as a recognized regional standard of job readiness.
2. Stronger cooperation across programs and funding streams by

- co-enrollments of job seekers between partnering funding streams to create a more seamless service delivery experience for participants who need help from multiple programs.
- developing a shared participant tracking system, preferably through the existing PA CareerLink website by granting additional partner access
- intensive case management, mentoring and wrap-around support services for job seekers with multiple barriers.

Project funds dedicated to employer focused training will be used for curriculum development and implementation of tiered, stackable training modules beginning with basic skills and increasing in vocational and technical skill levels relating to industry career ladders.

Project funds dedicated to job seekers involve programs and services aimed at eliminating barriers to employment and job readiness skills development to prepare them for employment. This includes the Family Action Teams for persons with multiple barriers. Family Action Teams offer group mentoring experiences designed to help individual families set goals and move from dependency to self-sufficiency. These families are trained using the *Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World* curriculum, to prepare them to become leaders in their families. Families completing the course are teamed with mentors from community partners trained in *Bridges Out of Poverty* to help them to understand how to help others more toward self-sufficiency.

Stronger partnerships are built when partners share common goals and mutually benefit from the partnership. Working toward common goals—either in developing cost-effective, readily accessible training that employers need—or in better serving mutual job seeker clients, there needs to be a "win-win" situation, which is the focus of this grant.

Job Readiness Training will be offered regionally through the Work Certified™ program. GECAC holds the license to conduct Work Certified™ and has a certified Teacher Trainer on staff to train interested partner staff. Work Certified™ is a 3-week competency-based, nationally recognized work readiness program that prepares participants with the tools to find and retain employment. Work Certified™ classes enroll cohort groups of 6 to 10. Participants are assessed on soft skills and academics related to the workplace. Competency areas include: Reading Comprehension, Business Technology (Computers Plus), Business Math, Pre-Employment Skills, Business Communications, Customer Service, Employment Expectations, Mastering Career Success and General Business Knowledge. Successful graduates meeting attendance and instructional standards will receive identification cards indicating they are ***"Work Certified."*** Work Certified™ workshops can also be integrated into a vocational training module.

ABLE providers also offer job readiness in the form of Career Pathways instruction which is funded through ABLE. However, such instruction can be enhanced or integrated with vocational instruction, with the enhanced curriculum instruction paid through this grant.

Adult Education and Literacy Activities Combined with Occupational Skills Training

ABLE providers offer free training to persons seeking GED®, adult basic education, remediation to improve academic skills and English as a Second Language instruction, but have restrictions on the use of ABLE funds. However, ABLE providers often have staff with the expertise to integrate adult literacy into work-based instruction (job specific reading and math, workplace basic skills, English proficiency for the workplace, etc.) but require additional funds to offer such instruction. Cost-effective, employer-focused training will be offered by ABLE providers, based only on the cost of instructional hours at the worksite and teacher prep time.

Customized Training (conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training).

Unless the focus is on job readiness or adult literacy is an integral part of the training, the training modules developed through this initiative will be customized training. Customized Training requires an employer's commitment to hire successful program graduates and to pay for at least 50% of the training costs. Pennsylvania previously had a waiver to offer a sliding scale for reimbursement for small and medium employers, to make it more affordable. However, by utilizing Career and Technical Centers or Higher Education Councils, costs may be reduced.

Key Partnerships Program outcomes can only be accomplished through established and renewed partnerships with existing workforce programs, and by fully integrating grant services into the existing PA CareerLink system. Key partnerships needed for program success:

- PA CareerLink WIA staff-co-enrollments and shared case management
- Community Action Agencies-additional services and supports
- ABLE providers-co-enrollments/shared case management, leveraged training, curriculum development and training provision
- Public Career and Technical Centers and Higher Education Councils -curriculum development and training provision
- Industry Partnership employers and their intermediary, Vie Associates, and other employer or employer groups-to identify training needs/specifications, curricula development and best practices
- EARN, Work Ready programs and Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program providers -- co-enrollments/shared case management, job readiness preparation prior to referral to CareerLink services.

- Economic development agencies-already networked with workforce services in NW PA through the Executive Pulse website/employer database designed to provide unified services to support business retention and expansion.
- Social service agencies- co-enrollment, intensive case management and support services.

iii. Evidence Base for Strategy

This proposal is based on two primary concepts – Right Skills Now, a fast-track training program developed by the Manufacturing Institute, and Cincinnati Works, a barrier-reduction, intensive case management program developed by Cincinnati Works. While both of these programs were developed based on solidly researched concepts, very little evidenced-based research has been conducted on either program and no research has been conducted on the combination of both initiatives despite the fact that several researchers including Eyster et al (2013) have noted a need to focus on barrier reduction in combination with training – "the career pathways approach leaves behind those that cannot move beyond entry-level jobs because of various barriers to employment" (pg. 6).

Right Skills Now focuses on obtainment of education credentials leading to career advancement along a career pathway. Fein (2012) notes that the very nature of the flexibility of career pathways concept makes it challenging to conduct evidenced-based research. The lack of studies on this concept imply that few researchers have been willing to take on this challenge. A search of the Workforce Systems Strategies website yields 77 studies on career pathways. Of these, only nine are level 1, impact-based studies; six of which focus on the unemployment to college transition, one that focuses on employment of elderly workers; and one that focuses on a mandatory welfare-to-work program. Only one, *Job Training that Works: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study* (2009) by Maguire et al used a control group to compare results of participants in an industry focused career training program again participants in other training programs. The results of this study are encouraging. Researchers found that participants earned 18.3% more than controls over 24 months; experienced 70% employment rates (60% controls); and were significantly more likely to work in jobs that offered benefits (Maguire et al, 2009, pg 7-8).

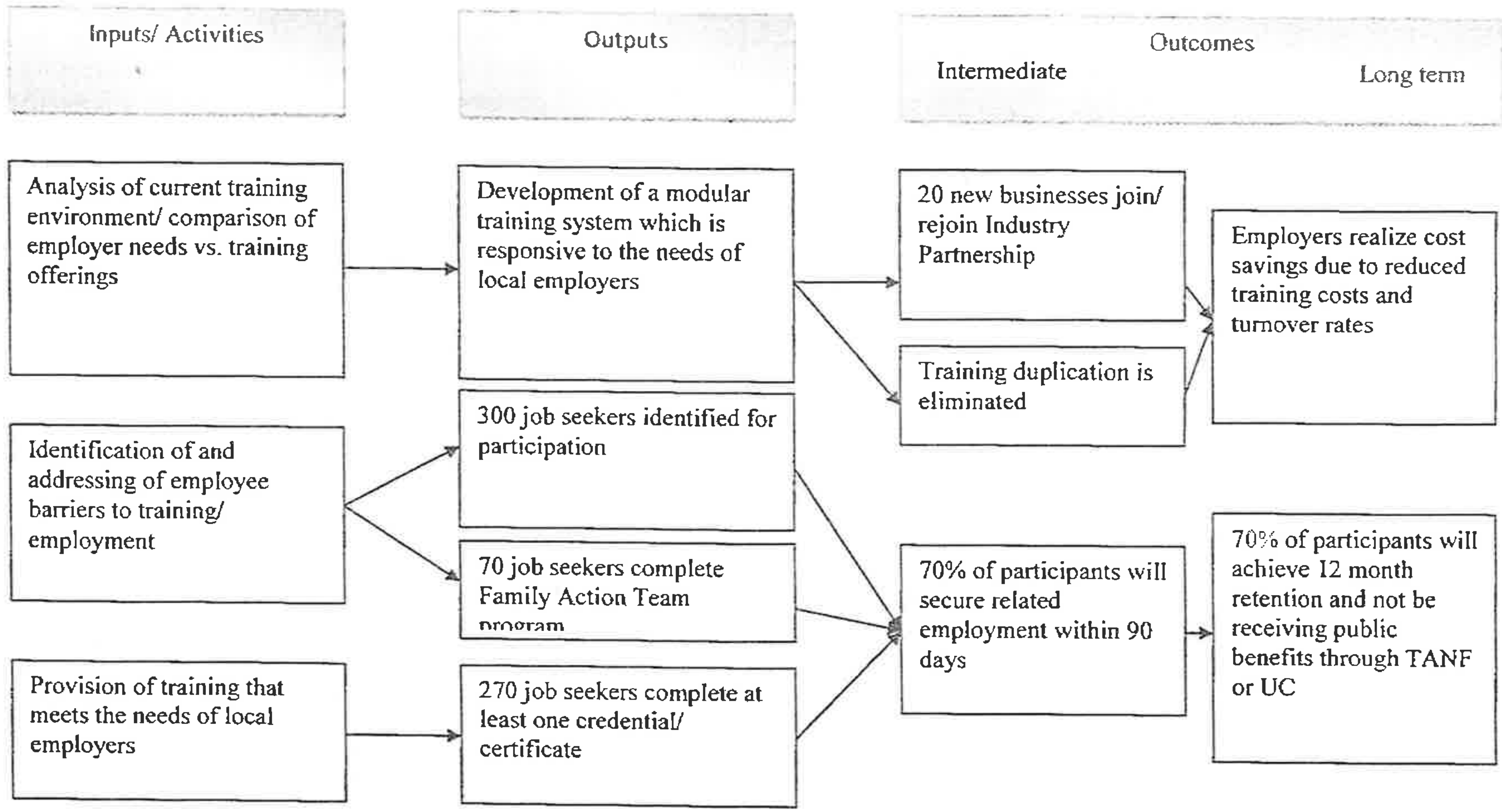
The second component of this proposal is based on Cincinnati Works, a barrier reduction and case management approach to employ hard to employ individuals. While not studied through an evidence-based, impact study, this program boasts approximately 600 employment placements annually with an average starting wage of $9.50/ hour and an employment retention rate of approximately 70% (www.cincinnatiworks.org). Despite the employee outcomes not being studied formally, an economic impact study was conducted by the University of Cincinnati (2013). The authors of this study found that between 2008-2012:

- Cincinnati Works helped provide value of more than $9.7 million by reducing reliance on social services and increasing income and sales tax collections.
- Cincinnati Works' placement of Members generated an estimated $1.5 million in tax revenues and saved society $8.2 million in social costs.

The hypothesis of this proposal is that the combination of intentional career pathways training that has been developed in conjunction with local employers and the intensive barrier reduction strategy will result in increased employment and retention of job seekers and decreased costs to employers related to hiring new employees due to decreased turnover. The logic model on the following page illustrates projected outputs and outcomes.

GECAC Workforce Innovation Grant Logic Model

Situation: The needs of both job seekers and employers in Northwest Pennsylvania will be met through enhanced barrier reduction and a more efficient and responsive job training environment.



WORKFORCE *Innovation* FUND

WIF Evaluation Timeline for Round 2 Grantees

October 2014	WIF Grants awarded
November 2014	WIF DOL Orientation Webinar
	Initial Contact with National Evaluation Coordinator (NEC)
	One on One Telephone Calls between Grantees (and Evaluators, if procured) and NEC
December 2014 - March 2015	NEC Webinars (to be scheduled)
By July 1, 2015	Submission of Initial Evaluation Design Report
By Sept. 1, 2015	Submission of Final Evaluation Design Report
By Sept. 30, 2015	DOL Determination on Moving to Phase II

Later in Grant Period

Prior to Sept. 2019	Draft Evaluation report to be submitted to DOL via NEC
Sept. 2019	Final Evaluation Report and Final Dataset to be submitted to DOL via NEC

Coordination with the WIF National Evaluation Coordinator

The WIF National Evaluation Coordinator (NEC) (Abt Associates) is an important resource for WIF grantees and third party evaluators throughout the life of the WIF evaluation. The primary goal of the NEC is to provide guidance and technical assistance to ensure that evaluations for WIF grants are of the highest possible quality and rigor. This document provides information about what to expect with respect to coordination with the NEC. For the WIF evaluation, third-party evaluators should plan to:

1) Submit high quality **evaluation deliverables** to the NEC. These include:

   ✓ **Initial Evaluation Design Reports**. The grantee and its third-party evaluator are expected to submit the Initial Evaluation Design Report as early as possible, but no later than nine months after grant award (July 1, 2015). Evaluators may be asked to work with the NEC to make any necessary changes to the evaluation design that would strengthen the evaluation. As necessary, the evaluation design will be resubmitted to achieve a confirmation from the NEC to proceed with the evaluation.

   ✓ **Final Evaluation Design Reports**. The Final Evaluation Design Report must be submitted as early as possible, but no later than eleven months after grant award (September 1, 2015). As per the WIF SGA, only those grantees with an approved and accepted Initial EDR will be allowed to move to Phase II of the grant.

   ✓ At the end of the evaluation period, third-party evaluators will collect and supply to the NEC the **data** collected for the evaluation as well as a **data dictionary**. The <u>data should be cleaned of all Personally Identifiable Information (PII).</u> Formats for this submission will be provided well in advance of submissions.

   ✓ The **final evaluation report** and **interim evaluation findings** (if planned) will also be submitted to the NEC. The evaluator must respond to questions and comments from the NEC designed to strengthen the final report. The final evaluation report will be resubmitted to the NEC as necessary. These reports will be reviewed in a similar fashion as the EDRs, but using a specific set of criteria based on your evaluation design as planned in the EDR. Evaluators will be provided an opportunity to respond to any feedback offered. Final reports will be posted to the publicly available DOL WIF SharePoint site.

   All deliverables should be submitted to the NEC <u>through the WIF email address with a copy posted to the WIF SharePoint site</u>.

2) Respond to **regular observation requests** from the WIF NEC.

    ✓ On a periodic basis, the WIF NEC will contact the third-party evaluator to ask questions about the implementation of the evaluation and to record any concerns or discrepancies from the plans. Depending on the complexity or depth of the concerns, these contacts may increase in frequency. Otherwise, they will likely occur once every three - four months.

3) Participate in regular evaluator **technical assistance.**

    ✓ The WIF NEC will deliver evaluation and data technical assistance through **webinars** to evaluators with similar design types. The webinars will provide guidance on issues and problems commonly faced in evaluations and address questions and problems frequently encountered by WIF evaluators. The webinars will also provide data-related guidance. Evaluators should plan to attend all webinars that are relevant for their evaluation.

    ✓ The WIF NEC has also established a **group discussion** section on the SharePoint site to facilitate real-time discussions among all third-party evaluators. The platform will provide an opportunity for the NEC to provide timely information to evaluators and for evaluators to have peer-to-peer discussions with one another and with the NEC on evaluation-related topics. Evaluators are encouraged to join the group and provide substantive comments when appropriate. If log in credentials are needed, please send an email request to WIF@abtassoc.com.

    ✓ In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor and the separate WIF TA provider for grantees, DOL expects to hold **collaboration events**. The first was held March 27-28, 2014 with the first round of WIF grantees and evaluators. Evaluators should plan to attend the events and budget for two days at each collaboration event.

    ✓ Continue to contact the WIF NEC for **any technical assistance needs** and respond the WIF NEC for special requests.

Description of Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of this project will serve to answer the following research question: ***Do participants in a customized job training and barrier reduction program experience increase job placement and retention rates?***

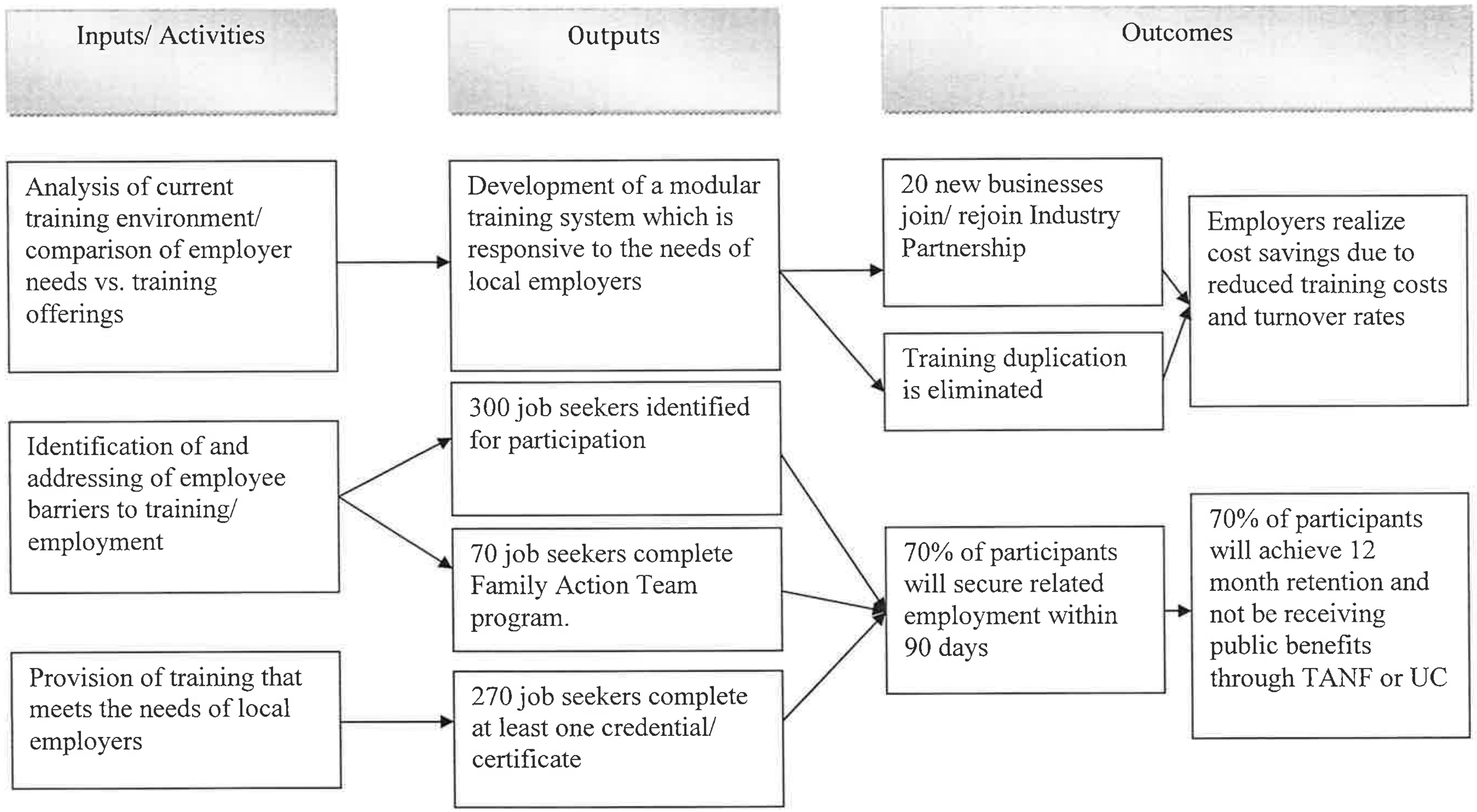
As a Type A project, the evaluation will take part through a three-part, evaluation study conducted by an independent evaluator. The three parts of the study are: an implementation study, an outcome (pre-post study) and a Cost Allocation Analysis. Based on the lack of evidence-based, and even outcomes-based, research found regarding the two primary components of this proposal and the complete, non-existence of any research combining these two components, this three-part study will enhance the overall evidence base of career pathway and barrier reduction programming.

As participants will be enrolled in this program at the same time that the local workforce system will be enrolling job seekers into Workforce Investment Act programming, the possibility exists that a Quasi-Experimental Design evaluation may be able to be implemented. If this occurs, WIA participants would be used as a comparison group against project participants that enter programming during the same cohort time frame. The possibility of this will be dependent on local WIA funding and if a large enough group of WIA participants are enrolled during each cohort to provide a sufficiently sized comparison group. The actual determination as to whether or not this is possible will be made by the independent evaluator.

The logic model on the next page will be used to guide the design and evaluation of this project:

GECAC Workforce Innovation Grant Logic Model

Situation: The needs of both job seekers and employers in Northwest Pennsylvania will be met through enhanced barrier reduction and a more efficient and responsive job training environment.



Preliminary evaluation plan for Implementation study

The implementation analysis had two main objectives: (1) to address whether the model was feasible and (2) to provide qualitative information on the effects of the model on customers, staff, and key partners. The following table summarizes the components of the plan:

Data points	**Data Source**	**Collection Method**	**Timeline**
Implementation process - Challenges - Successes	Project Manager Case managers	Interviews	Quarterly starting 1 quarter after hire
Participant Satisfaction - Case manager - Training - Family Action Teams	Participants	Interviews, focus groups and surveys	Every 6 months starting after program entry
Employer Satisfaction - Training curricula - Employee qualifications - Perceived cost benefit	Employers hiring participants	Interviews, focus groups and surveys	Training – at end of curricula development; Employee qualifications and perceived cost benefit – at program completion
Completion Data - Training programs - Family Action Teams	Data management system	Data analysis of starts vs. completions	At program completion

Preliminary evaluation plan for Outcomes study

The outcomes study will focus on answering the primary research question: ***Do participants in a customized job training and barrier reduction program experience increase job placement and retention rates?*** The analysis of three separate components will be needed to answer this question: training system changes, employee changes and employer changes. The following chart summarizes the key data points, which will need to be collected:

Data points	Data Source	Collection Method	Timeline
Training System			
Curricula Developed - # of tiered training programs offered - # of training modules available	Catalog of local training options	Record review	Baseline – program implementation; End – end of year four
Seamless training system - # of co-enrollments between partnering funding streams	Data Management System	Record review	Baseline – program implementation; End – end of year four
Employee Changes			
Demographic characteristics - Gender - Race/ Ethnicity - Age	Data Management System	Record review	Baseline – program entrance; End – 12 month post completion
Education characteristics - Highest level obtained - # of credentials completed	Data Management System	Record review	Baseline – program entrance; End – 12 month post completion
Other characteristics - On public assistance - Access to vehicle - Ever convicted of crime - Has children	Data Management System	Record Review	Baseline – program entrance; End – 12 month post completion
Employment characteristics - Earnings in past quarter/ year - Hourly wage (current or in most recent job) - Months since last employed - Benefits available through employment - Months at current job - Date of hire	Data Management System/ Administrative Records (i.e. unemployment data, etc)	Record Review	Baseline – program entrance; Ongoing – quarterly; End – 12 month post completion
Barrier reduction - Complete Family Action Team (FACT) program - FACT goals met	Data Management System	Record Review/ Interviews	Baseline – program entrance; Ongoing – quarterly; End – 12 month post completion

Data points	Data Source	Collection Method	Timeline
Employer Changes			
Employee retention	Employer records of employers partnering on customized training	Record review/ Interviews	Baseline – program entrance; Ongoing – quarterly; End – 12 month post completion
Training costs of new hires	Employer records of employers partnering on customized training	Record review/ Interviews	Baseline – program entrance; Ongoing – quarterly; End – 12 month post completion
Industry Partnership participation	Data Management System	Record review	Baseline – program entrance; Ongoing – quarterly; End – 12 month post completion

Preliminary evaluation plan for Cost Allocation Analysis

The Cost Allocation Analysis will examine what the cost per participant is for the following subgroups:

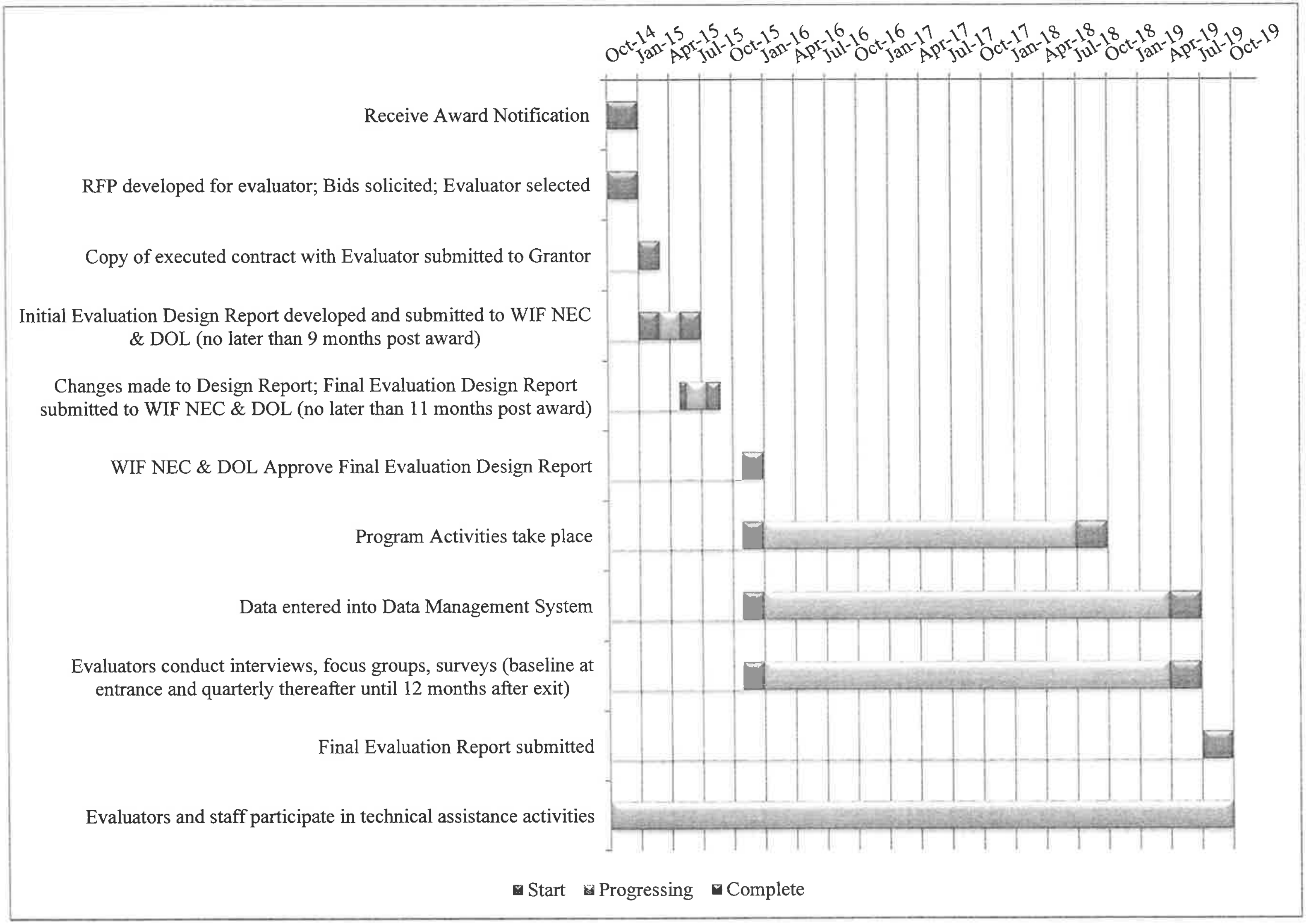
- Participants participating in training only
- Participants participating in the Family Action Team barrier reduction strategy only
- Participants participating in both components

All budget items will be taken into consideration when determining what costs to include in the cost per participant analysis. Budget documents will track costs by component type and will allow for these amounts to be divided out by the number of job seekers enrolling in each program component.

Additionally, as stated in the outcome study section, one outcome that will be tracked is the cost benefit analysis for participating employers. The evaluator will work with participating employers to determine their hiring costs and training costs for new hires before and after program implementation.

Evaluation Timeline and Schedule

The following timeline details the evaluation timeline:


Oct-14
Jan-15
Apr-15
Jul-15
Oct-15
Jan-16
Apr-16
Jul-16
Oct-16
Jan-17
Apr-17
Jul-17
Oct-17
Jan-18
Apr-18
Jul-18
Oct-18
Jan-19
Apr-19
Jul-19
Oct-19
Receive Award Notification
RFP developed for evaluator; Bids solicited; Evaluator selected
Copy of executed contract with Evaluator submitted to Grantor
Initial Evaluation Design Report developed and submitted to WIF NEC & DOL (no later than 9 months post award)
Changes made to Design Report; Final Evaluation Design Report submitted to WIF NEC & DOL (no later than 11 months post award)
WIF NEC & DOL Approve Final Evaluation Design Report
Program Activities take place
Data entered into Data Management System
Evaluators conduct interviews, focus groups, surveys (baseline at entrance and quarterly thereafter until 12 months after exit)
Final Evaluation Report submitted
Evaluators and staff participate in technical assistance activities
Start
Progressing
Complete

Contribution to Evidence Base

This proposal is based on two primary concepts – Right Skills Now, a fast-track training program developed by the Manufacturing Institute, and Cincinnati Works, a barrier-reduction, intensive case management program developed by Cincinnati Works. While both of these programs were developed based on solidly researched concepts, very little evidenced-based research has been conducted on either program and no research has been conducted on the combination of both initiatives despite the fact that several researchers including Eyster et al (2013) have noted a need to focus on barrier reduction in combination with training – "the career pathways approach leaves behind those that cannot move beyond entry-level jobs because of various barriers to employment" (pg. 6).

Right Skills Now focuses on obtainment of education credentials leading to career advancement along a career pathway. Fein (2012) notes that the very nature of the flexibility of career pathways concept makes it challenging to conduct evidenced-based research. The lack of studies on this concept imply that few researchers have been willing to take on this challenge. A search of the Workforce Systems Strategies website yields 77 studies on career pathways. Of these, only nine are level 1, impact-based studies; six of which focus on the unemployment to college transition, one that focuses on employment of elderly workers; and one that focuses on a mandatory welfare-to-work program. Only one, *Job Training that Works: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study* (2009) by Maguire et al used a control group to compare results of participants in an industry focused career training program again participants in other training programs. The results of this study are encouraging. Researchers found that participants earned 18.3% more than controls over 24 months; experienced 70% employment rates (60%

controls); and were significantly more likely to work in jobs that offered benefits (Maguire et al, 2009, pg 7-8).

The second component of this proposal is based on Cincinnati Works, a barrier reduction and case management approach to employ hard to employ individuals. While not studied through an evidence-based, impact study, this program boasts approximately 600 employment placements annually with an average starting wage of $9.50/ hour and an employment retention rate of approximately 70% (www.cincinnatiworks.org). Despite the employee outcomes not being studied formally, an economic impact study was conducted by the University of Cincinnati (2013). The authors of this study found that between 2008-2012:

- Cincinnati Works helped provide value of more than $9.7 million by reducing reliance on social services and increasing income and sales tax collections.
- Cincinnati Works' placement of Members generated an estimated $1.5 million in tax revenues and saved society $8.2 million in social costs.

The hypothesis of this proposal is that the combination of intentional career pathways training that has been developed in conjunction with local employers and the intensive barrier reduction strategy will result in increased employment and retention of job seekers and decreased costs to employers related to hiring new employees due to decreased turnover.

The evaluation plan developed for the proposal will add to the existing research base by adding an outcomes-based study to current literature reviews and concept studies. Positive outcomes from this study will help to drive the development of customized training developed in conjunction with local employers and offered in partnership with trainings funded through traditional methods. Additionally, it will validate the need for concentrated, barrier reduction strategies in combination with other workforce development efforts. This knowledge could be used to drive the refinement of the current Workforce Investment Act system and could confirm the need to modify the services offered through Core, Intensive and Training programs. It also could inform the need to customize each of these areas based on the characteristics of the job seeker (age, past employment history, other social barriers, etc.)

References

Eyster, L., Anderson, T., & Durham, C. (2013). Innovations and future directions for workforce development in the post-recession era. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Fein, D.J. (2012). Career pathways as a framework for program design and evaluation: A working paper from the innovative strategies for increasing self-sufficiency (ISIS) project. *OPRE Report # 2012-30,* Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Maguire, S., Freely, J., Clymer, C., & Conway, M. (2009). Job training that works: Findings from the sectoral employment impact study. *P/PV in Brief.*

University of Cincinnati Economics Center. (2013). *The economic benefits of Cincinnati Works on the Cincinnati Region 2008-2012.*