

# MDES Request for Qualifications for Senior Community Service Employment Program

## **Introduction**

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a federally funded workforce development initiative authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act. Its primary purpose is to promote economic self-sufficiency for low-income adults age 55 and older by providing paid, part-time community service assignments and structured training opportunities. Through subsidized on-the-job training at government and nonprofit host agencies, participants gain current work experience, develop marketable skills, and transition toward unsubsidized employment.

SCSEP is an integral partner in the broader public workforce system established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Although SCSEP operates under separate authorizing legislation, the program is required to coordinate closely with WIOA Title I and Title III programs, the One-Stop delivery system, and Local Workforce Development Boards. This coordination ensures that older workers receive streamlined access to employment, training, and supportive services.

In practice, SCSEP and WIOA collaborate through participant co-enrollment when appropriate, reciprocal referrals, alignment of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs) with WIOA Individual Service Strategies (ISS), and shared use of American Job Centers (AJCs), branded as WIN Job Centers (WJCs) in Mississippi. This integrated approach reduces duplication, maximizes resources, and strengthens employment outcomes by connecting older workers to a comprehensive suite of workforce services, including job search assistance, skills training, employer engagement activities, and career pathways development.

Together, SCSEP and WIOA form a coordinated system that supports the workforce needs of employers while helping older job seekers re-enter or remain in the labor market through targeted, skill-focused training and supportive services.

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is for the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

## **Purpose**

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) is seeking submissions from nonprofit entities qualified to administer and operate SCSEP. A request for qualifications is not an implied award of grant funds. Submissions will be scored and the highest scoring submissions not approved will be prioritized for future opportunities.

## **Specific Guidelines**

Who is eligible to apply?

- Non-profits
- Community Organizations

## **Background**

SCSEP is authorized by the Older Americans Act (Title V), as amended by Public Law 109-365 on October 17, 2006. The SCSEP program is administered by the United States Department of Labor (DOL) and serves unemployed low-income persons who are fifty-five (55) years of age and older and who have poor employment prospects. The purposes of the SCSEP Program are to:

- Foster individual economic self-sufficiency;
- Promote useful part-time opportunities in community service assignments;
- Provide participant training; and
- Enable or enhance job skills, so individuals are able to obtain unsubsidized employment.

SCSEP provides a win-win for participants and their communities. Participants help community organizations extend their capabilities, while developing their own skills, self-confidence, and a restore sense of self-worth. Key elements of SCSEP include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Providing meaningful part-time community service assignments for people with low income who are fifty-five (55) years of age or older, while providing transition to unsubsidized employment;

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- Providing eligible individuals wages for community service assignments, related counseling, assistance in transition to unsubsidized employment, and other benefits as allowed under the federal regulations for the program; and
- Documenting an Individual Development Plan (IDP) assessment of eligible individual's need for community service, training, and employment.

The chart below includes the counties where the project will be conducted and the number of SCSEP authorized positions.

<b>County</b>	<b>Number of Positions</b>
Covington	5
Forrest	4
Harrison	4
Jefferson Davis	3
Jones	4
Pearl River	4

### **Program Information**

#### **Grant Period**

The Grant Period for the grants awarded under this RFQ is approximately twelve (12) months from the grant start date, with the option of renewals, at MDES's discretion. In considering such renewal, MDES may take into account performance, progress toward expected outcomes, and expenditures, as well as other factors. The anticipated grant start date is July 1, 2026.

#### **Total Funds Available**

Total funding available for this RFQ is approximately two hundred twenty-one thousand, four hundred fifty-seven dollars and zero cents (\$221,457.00). Total funding available will be based on the 2025-2026 DOL SCSEP funding amount, which is subject to change based on what is awarded, approved and authorized by DOL. If DOL's revised funding amounts are published during the contract development phase of the grant, the funding amount may be adjusted.

Funding Authority The funding source for this RFQ is Title V of the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 (42 U.S.C. § 3056 et seq.), as amended in 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-365.

### **Number of Programs to be Funded**

MDES will make at least one (1) award under this RFQ.

### **Eligible Applicants**

Eligible Applicants under this RFQ are nonprofit organizations that have demonstrated expertise and knowledge of Title V of the OAA and its implementation. Applicants must have experience in:

- Strong SCSEP performance and transition capabilities
- Seasoned team with expertise to cover the expansion areas
- Ability to forward fund operations and work on a reimbursement basis
- Developing subsidized part-time community service work-based training positions for low-income older individuals;
- Providing access to job training and education; and
- Placing individuals in unsubsidized employment.
- Each eligible Offeror may submit only one (1) proposal. If more than one (1) proposal is received from an eligible Offeror, the MDES will only screen and evaluate the last proposal received from that Offeror.

### **Eligible Population to be Served**

The eligible population to be served under this RFQ consists of individuals who:

- are fifty-five (55) years of age and older;
- are unemployed at the time of enrollment;
- have an income at or below one hundred and twenty-five percent (125%) of the poverty level as defined according to size of family unit by the federal Department of Health and Human Services
- United States (U.S.) citizens or noncitizens authorized to work in the U.S.; and
- if male, meet U.S. Military Selective Service registration requirements.

The Successful Offeror shall determine eligibility for each participant prior to participant receiving any services funded through this grant. The Successful Offeror shall document and maintain confidential eligibility documentation files for each participant receiving services

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funded through this grant. Failure to determine eligibility, document eligibility, or maintain the required files for all enrolled participants may result in disallowed costs and subsequent repayment of grant funds.

### **Program Requirements**

#### **Grant-Specific Requirements**

Applicants awarded a grant under this RFQ shall comply with the following grant-specific requirements:

- Ensure expenditures for participant wages and fringe benefits that are required by state or Federal law (such as workers' compensation and unemployment insurance) shall be at least seventy-five percent (75%) of total funding awarded by DOL.;
- Ensure that no more than 8.5% of the funds expended by the Subgrantee from each fiscal year's allotment shall be expended for administrative activities.
- Provide in-kind donations from non-federal sources which shall be at least ten percent (10%) of the total costs of the program (total funding awarded);
- Conduct outreach and recruitment throughout the served areas for the program;
- Determine, document, and maintain eligibility documentation on file prior to enrolling participants into the program;
- Ensure that priority of services is provided to qualified veterans or qualified spouses as described in 38 U.S.C. §§ 4211 and 4215 or any subsequent waivers
- Identify and serve participants with "most in need" characteristics as defined at 20 C.F.R. §641.140
- Ensure compliance with extensive programmatic assurances. Provide a handbook that orients participants to the program that includes, but is not limited to, the following information:
  - Policies and procedures, including the complaint resolution process;
  - Attain the estimated or projected minimum required deliverable targets established by DOL for SCSEP including, but not limited to:
    - Participant enrollment goal;
    - Community service hours goal;
    - Unsubsidized employment goal;

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- Unsubsidized employment retention goal;
- Average earnings goal;
- Assist participants who exited SCSEP to:
- Obtain unsubsidized employment in the first quarter following the quarter of the exit;
- Retain unsubsidized employment in the second and third quarters following the quarter
- of the exit; and
- Retain unsubsidized employment earning equal to or greater than the DOL determined
- average wage; and
- Perform, coordinate, and oversee the provisions of the activities described within this RFQ in compliance with Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. § 3056 et seq.), as amended, the DOL regulations for SCSEP at 20 C.F.R. Part 641, as amended.

### **Contract Amendments**

Any amendment to a grant issued under this RFQ is required to be within the scope of the original proposal, resulting grant, and this RFQ. A substantial change in the scope of services or budget will not be allowed.

### **Activities and Performance Measures**

Deliverables, targets, and due dates will be based on negotiations by MDES and DOL (with input from the Offeror.) A description of the performance measures is found at § 641.140.

### **Reporting Requirements**

The successful Offeror will input monthly data, no later than ten (10) days after the end date of each month, into the DOL SCSEP Grants Performance Management System (GPMS) based on DOL SCSEP requirements including, but not limited to the following:

- number of participants enrolled;
- participant information, including, but not limited to:

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- ethnicity;
- minority;
- assigned Employment and Training coordinator; and
- geographic area or county;
- number of “most in need” characteristics per participant;
- number of community hours worked by participants;
- community service assignment(s);
- number of participants that exit the program; and
- number of participants that obtained unsubsidized employment.

The successful Offeror will provide participant record files no later than ten (10) days after the end of each month in the form and format specified by the MDES and include unique, participant-level information such as, but not limited to:

- social security number;
- race;
- ethnicity;
- age;
- barriers to employment (using standard barriers);
- date of participation;
- date of service;
- date of exit;
- reason for exit;
- educational achievement;
- employment status for four calendar quarters following exit;
- wage information for four calendar quarters following exit; and/or
- other information related to the program.

The information required will be subject to change based on federal or state requirements.

The successful Offeror will submit quarterly written reports due no later than thirty (30) days after the end date of each quarter on a DOL-provided reporting template.

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The successful Offeror will enter all final data into DOL SCSEP GPMS no later than sixty (60) days after the grant end date. The designated MDES point of contact will generate an end-of-year report from DOL SCSEP GPMS.

### **Expenditure Limitations**

Costs must conform to limitations or exclusions as to the types or amounts of cost items set forth in the following:

- laws, regulations, rules, and guidance governing fund use for the fund sources in 20 CFR Part 641 (SCSEP Final Rule);
- the cost requirements in 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance for Nonprofits and Conditions of this RFQ Solicitation; and
- this RFQ and the resulting grant.

Funds must not be used for:

- purchase of real property, new construction, or renovations of facilities;
- equipment; i.e. non-expendable, tangible, personal property having a useful life of more than one (1) year, and an acquisition cost of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) or more;
- supplanting existing federal, state, or local funds available to the proposed program;
- payment cost of pension benefits, annual leave, accumulated sick leave, or bonuses;
- any use that is inconsistent with the provisions of this solicitation.

Funds are subject to the following limitations:

- expenditures for participant wages and benefits that are required by state or Federal law (such as workers' compensation and unemployment insurance) shall be at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the total funding awarded by DOL;
- in-kind donations from non-federal sources shall be at least ten percent (10%) of the total costs of the program (total funding awarded); and
- Administrative costs charged to this grant shall not exceed 8.5% of the funds expended by the Subgrantee from each fiscal year's allotment.

## **Proposal Requirements**

### **Project Design**

- Proposals should use the attached template and must include the following information:
- Identify the proposing organization.
- Specify the contact information; include contact's name, title, address, phone number, and email.
- Provide the most recent completed independent audit.

Provide a comprehensive plan of action that outlines the scope and detail of your SCSEP project and how you will accomplish the proposed employment and training activities.

Describe how you will implement SCSEP by addressing the three program factors listed below. For each component, if you have had experience providing these or similar services, include a discussion of what you have done, what outcomes you have achieved, and what changes to your current program design(s), if any, you will make if awarded a grant under this competition. Describe your partnerships with AJCs, employers, and host agencies, and other organizations and detail the specific roles played by each wherever possible. Include data on your prior experience wherever possible.

### **Working with Employers and Employer Associations**

- Describe how you will leverage existing partnerships and/or develop new partnerships with employers and organizations throughout the grant cycle that will support the participants' employment and community service assignment goals. Provide at least one example of how you have done so in the past;
- Describe how you will coordinate services with existing partnerships and/or develop new partnerships with agencies, organizations, etc. to help defray or provide at no cost, or at a fair and reasonable cost supportive services, such as transportation, health and medical services, special job-related or personal counseling, incidentals such as work shoes, badges, uniforms, tools, etc., necessary to enable participants to engage in employment related activities. (See 20 CFR 641.545);
- Explain how you will engage employers to determine their needs and how you will help them hire older workers from your SCSEP program; and

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- Identify the following employer-based activities that will be used in your SCSEP project as applicable:
  - On the job experience (OJE);
  - Inviting employers to have input on your SCSEP program design; and
  - Encouraging employers to prioritize hiring qualified SCSEP participants job openings.

### **Recruiting and Managing Host Agencies**

- Describe your strategy to recruit host agencies to serve as community service training sites for older workers and describe how you will determine whether potential host agencies' community service needs align with SCSEP's stated goals and whether host agencies can provide appropriate training opportunities for participants;
- Describe your existing relationships with host agencies or your plans to develop new relationships with host agencies and how you plan to leverage those relationships to provide placements for your SCSEP participants that prepare them for opportunities in in-demand industries and careers and assist them in becoming job-ready; and
- Describe in detail the past contributions of your host agency partners to your SCSEP or similar project, their roles in preparing SCSEP participants for unsubsidized employment, and how you will ensure the community service positions provided are consistent with participants' IEPs.

### **Providing Quality Service to Participants**

- Describe your plan to recruit SCSEP participants and the roles that AJCs and any other partners will play in the recruitment of participants. Cite factors that might promote or discourage the recruitment of eligible participants, including veterans, minorities, Indians or Native Americans, and others that possess at least one of the priority characteristics. Current grantees must cite performance data from the SCSEP Minority Report to support your description;
- Explain how your selection of sub-recipients in areas with substantial

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populations of individuals with barriers to employment will result in special consideration to organizations with demonstrated expertise in serving minorities and individuals with barriers to employment, as defined by statute. If you intend to provide services directly, indicate this and describe in detail how you will serve individuals with significant barriers to employment;

- Describe in detail your choice of any general training, specialized training, or OJE that will be provided while the participants are engaged in the program, in addition to the community service training. Explain your choice of training and how it will help participants become self-sufficient and obtain unsubsidized employment. As an attachment, provide a work plan that includes a schedule of training activities and associated supportive services eligible participants will receive while engaged in the program, and any signed OJE contracts. Ensure that your budget narrative reflects these activities.
- Identify and explain how the project will overcome any potential barriers to placement in community service assignments and unsubsidized employment faced by participants;
- Describe your ability to move participants with barriers to employment from community service assignments into unsubsidized employment and include your proposed timeline for moving participants through the program before they meet their Individual Durational Limit (IDL) of 48 months (see CFR 641.570);
- Describe how participants will be provided with a comprehensive assessment and how they will participate in the development of their IEPs. Explain how you will ensure that participants' training assignments and host agency rotations are consistent with their IEPs;
- If you plan to request either an increase in administrative costs (see CFR 641.870) or to use additional funds for training and supportive services (see CFR 641.874), indicate this and explain in detail how you will use these funds to assist participants in gaining unsubsidized employment; and
- Describe how you will serve diverse populations in your region(s), including individuals who have limited English proficiency.

## **Organizational, Administrative, and Fiscal Capacity**

Describe in detail your organization's ability to administer SCSEP in the areas where you are requesting authority to provide service. Describe how your organizational, administrative, and fiscal capacity will support the SCSEP project by addressing the program factors below. For each component, include a comprehensive description of what you have done in the past and what outcomes you have achieved. Include data on your prior experience wherever applicable.

### **Capacity to manage core organizational functions and program operations**

- Describe how you will manage program operations internally and through Subrecipients and local staff, if applicable. Detail your methods of communication with internal program staff and sub-recipients regarding policies and procedures for SCSEP, data collection, and resolving any issues regarding program performance, participant services, and fiscal management that may emerge;
- Describe the type and frequency of substantive training that internal program staff and sub-recipients will receive on program policy, DOL guidance and directives, performance, and fiscal reporting;
- Describe your schedule for monitoring sub-recipients and/or local projects. Describe the monitoring tools and procedures you will use to track subrecipients' operations against performance objectives and financial requirements;
- Describe how your system is consistent for prescribing corrective actions and resolving issues of performance, data collection, or fiscal management either internally or for subrecipients and local projects. Describe at least one instance where you, a sub-recipient, and/or local project have needed to improve performance on a performance measure, a program requirement like service to minorities, data collection or reporting, or fiscal management, and what steps were taken to achieve that improvement. Detail what steps you took to address these situations and what results were achieved;
- Describe your ability to coordinate activities with other organizations at the State and local levels and provide at least one example of when you have done so; and
- Describe your ability to manage a disruption of services in community service assignments at host agencies, e.g., due to a natural disaster.

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- Describe how you protect all Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Paper documentation requiring PII must be stored in a locked and secure location with access limited to trusted personnel. Electronic records with PII must be encrypted or password protected.

### **Capacity to manage data**

- Describe your capacity to collect and manage data in a way that ensures consistent, accurate, and expeditious reporting as required by the Department. Include detailed information on:
  - Your past and current use of SCSEP Performance and Results Quarterly Performance Report System (SPARQ) or a similar performance tracking System (GPMS);
  - Your plan to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of data entry. Current SCSEP grantees must describe in detail your history of timeliness and accuracy, including your rejection rate for the last three years; and
  - Your method of data validation. New applicants must explain how you will use DOL SCSEP GPMS to track performance data, how you will ensure the accuracy and timeliness of data entry, your current process for ensuring the quality of the data you collected and reported for similar programs over the last three program years, and how you have used your past data collection to improve data reporting or program implementation. Current SCSEP Grantees must indicate whether or not you have completed data validation for the past three years and explain how you have used the results of data validation to improve data collection and reporting or program implementation.

### **Financial stability and ability to adjust to changes in funding**

Describe your past experience in implementing a new program or handling an increase in funding for an existing program; and

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- Demonstrate your ability to respond to reductions in funding while minimizing disruption to participants. Provide an example if appropriate.
- Describe your financial capacity to administer SCSEP by providing evidence of strong accounting systems, fiscal controls, and previous grant fund management, and a review of audited financial statements. Include detailed descriptions of:
  - Your capacity for early start-up financial activities;
  - The status of your Fiscal Management Information Systems and integrated data sets relative to the system;
  - The fiscal controls you have in place for auditing and accountability procedures;
  - Your accounting system's present ability to handle multiple funding streams;
  - Your system to track planned expenditures that will allow you to compare actual expenditures and accrued expenses in real time to planned or estimated expenditures; and
  - Your system to track forecasted and actual enrollment and forecasted and actual participant wages and fringe benefits.

### **Reporting and audits**

- Submit a copy of your most recent completed independent audit and describe your fiscal reporting procedures and audits. Include detailed descriptions of:
  - The timeliness of your quarterly fiscal and program reporting for SCSEP and/or other projects, if applicable;
  - Your ability to make participant financial data available to the Department (e.g., time sheets, receipts);
  - Your audit or monitoring findings and recommendations for the past three years;
  - The status of any corrective action(s);
  - How you ensure that all grant funds are spent throughout the program year in an efficient manner. Current SCSEP grantees must discuss your past experience with recaptured SCSEP funds and experience managing your spending in the final quarter of each program year;

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- The number and type of audit findings you have had in the past three years. Include your most recent audited financial statements and, if applicable, the accompanying management letter as attachments.
- Describe how you will prevent fraud or criminal activity within your organization; how you will prevent any serious administrative deficiencies, such as failure to maintain a financial management system, failure to correct deficiencies brought to your attention in writing as a result of monitoring activities, failure to return grant close-out packages within the Department's designated timeframe, and failure to submit timely reports.

### **Partnerships**

Describe the relationships you have developed with key partners (e.g. employers, educational institutions, AJCs, Area Agencies on Aging and others within and outside the public workforce system) to support SCSEP or similar programs and how this coordination of workforce services supports the participants. Detail the specific roles played by each organization and tie them to your program activities and timeline. Include data on your prior experience where applicable.

Specifically:

- Clearly describe how you will collaborate with other organizations to support the program implementation and operation throughout the life cycle of the grant, including their specific areas of expertise and training and activities for which they will be responsible;
- Describe the types of agreements you have in place with partners, both mandated and other. Describe the types of contributions received through these partners, such as services, materials, and any money received from partners in the last three program years specified as funding, the dollar amount (both cash and in-kind), and the percentage of your total proposed SCSEP budget that it represents. Include the following attachments, as applicable:
  - Memoranda of Understanding that describes services, referrals and cost sharing;
  - Memoranda of Agreement that describe the relationship and obligations of each party;
  - Signed letters of commitment (not simply letters of support)

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- List the key partners with which you currently have a relationship in administering SCSEP or a similar program in size and scope and any additional partners with whom you will develop a relationship; and
- Describe your ability to maintain and manage partnerships, including information about:
- How you communicate with key partners in your SCSEP or similar project;
- What changes, if any, you will make to your current method of forming and maintaining partnerships if awarded a grant under this competition; and
- Any relevant joint achievements.

### **Past Performance – Programmatic Capability**

Please provide performance results for Program Years 2022–2025, comparing your final outcomes to the targets and goals established for your programs. If you have previously operated SCSEP, submit your SCSEP performance data for these years. If you have not operated a SCSEP program, you may instead provide performance results from other employment, training, or workforce-related programs you have managed within the last 3–5 years that demonstrate your ability to meet performance goals, track outcomes, and successfully administer federally funded programs.

### **Budget and Budget Justification**

The upcoming SCSEP FOA will provide additional information on requirements related to the budget and budget justification.

- Describe your budget and demonstrate how it supports the activities that you have described in the project narrative and that it meets the requirements for SCSEP; and
- Clearly demonstrate that key personnel have sufficient time to devote to your SCSEP project to achieve project results.

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### Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria and point values for scoring are provided below:

<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Points</b>
Demonstrated Experience	20
Outreach and Recruitment of Participants	15
Participant Enrollment Activities	20
Host Agencies and Training Opportunities	15
Program Management Plan and Structure	15
Budget: Budget, Budget Detail/Narrative Form	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### Schedule of Major Events:

<b>Major Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
RFQ posted on MDES SCSEP Website	April 17, 2026
<b>Submission Deadline by 12:00 P.M. CST</b>	<b>May 29, 2026</b>
Review and Evaluation	June 1-5, 2026
Interviews with top contenders	June 8-12, 2026
Selection and notification of successful bidder(s)	June 15, 2026
Anticipated grant begin date	July 1, 2026

**Note:** All dates after the submission deadline are approximate and may be adjusted as conditions dictate without addendum to this RFQ.

### Authorized MDES Contact

The Authorized MDES Contact for this RFQ is:

**Name:** Robert DeYoung

**Title:** Director, Office of Grant Management

**Reference:** RFQ Senior Community Service Employment Program

**Mailing Address:** 1235 Echelon Parkway, Jackson, Mississippi 39213

**Telephone:** (601) 321-6000

**Email:** [rdeyoung@mdes.ms.gov](mailto:rdeyoung@mdes.ms.gov)

### Confidentiality

All information disclosed by either party in connection with this RFQ is confidential and shall be treated as such.

**Submittals**

Proposers may submit forms in electronic format (Word or .pdf files) using the attached “Template for RFQ” to Robert DeYoung at the MDES Office of Grant Management. The subject line should read “PY26 SCSEP Proposals.” All proposals must be submitted by the close of business on **May 30, 2026**.

**Important Notice of Change:**

This RFQ contains the requirements that respondents must meet to submit a responsive bid. Proposers must have an active Unique Entity ID (UEI) number and active registration with <https://sam.gov> to be considered for funding. The federal government uses a UIE for each entity that does business with the federal government. For more than two decades, DUNS has served as the unique entity ID; however, DUNS ended on April 4, 2022, when the federal government completed the transition to the new UEI that is issued within the System for Award Management (SAM). Successful respondents will serve as contractors of federal WIOA funds authorized and administered by the United States Department of Labor (DOL) and under the oversight of the SMW. Therefore, successful bidders must have an UIE before a subgrant can be fully executed.