

CSW Consultant Application

Consultant Services & Vendors



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Purpose

Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) seeks individuals and organizations with consulting expertise in any of the five strategy team areas: Competencies & Credentials; Federal, State, & Local Systems Change; Improving Practices & Outcomes; Research & Evaluation; and Trauma & Resilience at Work. CSW is looking to establish a list of qualified consultants from which it will draw upon on an as needed basis to provide support on different topics related to our strategy team areas. This expertise can include training (virtual, in-person, and/or hybrid); organizational assessment and coaching; technical assistance; data collection and analysis; evaluation; professional development and/or organization development services; communities of practice or learning communities of individuals and/or organizations.

From the submissions to this application, we will select providers for a list of approved procured experts we can contact for specific opportunities, as relevant. The list of qualified experts will be good for two (2) years from the date of notice. Inclusion on the list of approved providers does not constitute a promise that the provider will be selected by CSW to perform work.

CSW is committed to building a diverse network and strongly encourages responses from candidates of color.

Background

CSW is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, founded in 1991, that partners with foundations, government, business, and community leaders to increase economic opportunity and sustainable prosperity by helping them to reimagine everything about work and learning. CSW catalyzes change in educational and labor market systems, policies, and practices to increase economic mobility, particularly for people of color and others historically excluded from success. We focus on achieving scalable improvements in worker skills, lifelong learning, and job quality. CSW collaborates with change makers to develop strategies, identify evidence to inform strategies, build the capacity of organizations, manage initiatives, and evaluate lessons learned. CSW envisions a society in which every person is able to earn a family-sustaining income, achieve upward mobility, and adapt to the future.

CSW's Strategy Teams

COMPETENCIES & CREDENTIALS

The Competencies & Credentials team focuses on the advancement of competencies as essential currency within education and labor markets to improve recognition of skills, more equitable job descriptions, streamlined learning pathways, and more aligned educational program design.

All learning matters, wherever and however it's obtained. To that end, all learning should count toward a credential, whether a degree, a certificate, an industry certification, a license, an

apprenticeship completion, or a micro-credential. And what that credential represents should be easy for the holder, an employer, or an educator to understand.

We can achieve that by focusing on competencies— what a credential holder knows and is able to do. With competencies, job seekers and workers can communicate the knowledge, skills, and abilities they've developed throughout a lifetime of work and learning. Employers can identify more precisely the knowledge and skills a worker will need to succeed in a job. And educators can modularize and customize the opportunities they offer to help learners build on competencies they already possess.

CSW is a leader in a growing national movement to rethink credentialing and to increase the use of competencies. We helped launch and catalyze a national dialogue and development of tools to make credentials more understandable and interoperable and to advance the use of competencies as essential currency within education and labor markets. We believe that this work will lead to improved recognition of skills, more equitable job descriptions, streamlined learning pathways, and more aligned educational program design. This is critical to ensuring increased economic mobility for people of color and others historically excluded from marketplace opportunities.

Core Services

Expanding the use of competencies: Supported through CSW's CompXChange tool, CSW works with states, communities, employers, and educational institutions to use competencies to improve decisions, systems, and services. Examples include:

- Building competency-based talent systems within organizations, infusing competencies into job descriptions, hiring criteria, performance feedback, and professional development.
- Better aligning educational programs and job requirements, using competencies as a common language to strengthen the connectivity between employers and educators.
- Improving career navigation, by identifying multiple potential occupations within which specific bundles of competencies are valuable.
- Integrating competencies into state workforce and education systems and policies.

Building systems of incremental credentials: Today, most learning doesn't result in a credential the learner can use in seeking or advancing in employment and education. Those who've earned college credits but not attained a degree, many who've learned at work, and those who've learned informally face this barrier. We believe enabling learners to earn incremental credentials can become an essential part of the evolving work and learn ecosystem.

CSW is partnering with SUNY-Empire State College and George Washington University to encourage and support colleges, universities, and postsecondary systems to develop scalable smaller credentials to complement the degrees they already offer.

Ensuring competencies and nondegree credentials increase equity and economic mobility: The explosively growing array of nondegree credentials has the potential to increase mobility, especially for Black and Latinx workers. But the risk is that new credentials and competency usage will instead have unintended consequences that decrease opportunity. CSW is developing work to understand these risks and to help policymakers and

practitioners take actions to ensure their approaches are centered in equity. Examples of questions we want to explore:

- How do we ensure the US avoids building a two-tier postsecondary learning system, with degree programs being for one class of workers and nondegree credentials for a different class?
- Are elements of the information about credentials implicitly racially biased?
- Are credentials used as a tool of inclusion or exclusion?
- How do we ensure that competency assessments are culturally appropriate?
- Does increasing use of incremental credentials result in improving career pathways and earnings for people of color?

FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL SYSTEMS CHANGE

The Federal, State & Local Systems Change team focuses on transforming multi-level workforce systems, policy, and practice to reduce poverty, increase economic mobility for low-wage workers, and address racial disparities. Many tools and systems focused on increasing economic opportunity were designed for a very different economy and set of challenges than we now face. We need to rethink learning, work, supports, and their intersections. CSW works with stakeholders at multiple levels – federal, state, community, industry, institutional – to challenge the way things have long been done, strip away outdated assumptions, and co-design approaches that are more culturally and economically relevant now.

The challenges we face require a focus on how multiple systems and sectors interconnect to build interdisciplinary solutions. That work coalesces within communities in which stakeholders are committed to these goals and to undertaking complex systems changes to achieve them. We connect the dots among workforce development, education, human services, community and economic development, and industry in order to achieve meaningful, comprehensive results. We convene and translate across disciplines to reach shared understanding and joint action about issues and effective strategies for addressing them.

Focus Areas

Redesigning state and local workforce systems: For 30 years CSW has helped dozens of states and communities reimagine their workforce development strategies and systems, launch strong state and local workforce boards, and develop one-stop career centers as a vastly improved service for job seekers.

- CSW provides site-based design facilitation and workforce board member training, has managed an innovators network of leading workforce board directors, conducts national benchmarking studies of promising practices of workforce boards and one-stop career centers, and has written guidebooks about being an effective workforce board.
- As a local example, CSW has assisted Detroit since 2014 with improving and integrating its workforce development and adult education systems, resulting in a stronger workforce board and agency and the revitalization of a number of employment and education initiatives across the city.

Advancing workforce innovations: CSW has been instrumental in helping state and local public workforce leaders adopt evidence-based innovative strategies, including industry sector strategies, career navigation systems, and work-based learning models.

- We co-led a multi-year learning network and series of policy academies to introduce teams from more than 20 states to the sector strategy approach and to support its integration into policy.
- We have engaged in research on promising work-based learning models and funding strategies.

Rethinking approaches to poverty reduction, economic security, and mobility: CSW has been involved in a number of national, state, and local initiatives to rethink how to provide economic opportunity, security, and mobility supports and services to a range of people who need them. For example:

- CSW co-led with the federal Office of Community Services a national dialogue on taking a more community-based and holistic approach to reducing chronic unemployment.
- We co-authored a report with the Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity in Michigan, summarizing testimony from a series of statewide forums and outlining an entrepreneurial approach to addressing economic challenges facing many people living in poverty.
- CSW has also worked with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Family Economic Security program to conduct local and national research on potential strategies for investment that align with Kellogg's goal of moving families to 200% plus of the federal poverty level. [The Supporting Economic Security for Families in Grand Rapids](#) report summarizes feedback from a community-wide stakeholder engagement process and offers recommendations on key levers for change in the areas of economic stability and workforce mobility.

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IMPROVING PRACTICES & OUTCOMES

Job seekers need access to effective training and employment supports, and employers need partners who can provide them with the talent and assistance they need to offer equitable workplaces and better jobs. Strengthening the capacity of workforce professionals to improve results for both job seekers and employers matters more than ever, as communities seek to increase economic mobility for low-wage workers and address racial disparities in a dramatically changing environment. The Improving Practices and Outcomes team works in collaboration with funders, workforce providers, and other partners to offer opportunities that build the field's capacity to deliver more effective services and policies to increase economic mobility for low-wage workers, and address racial disparities in this changing environment.

Community-based organization (CBO) service providers are often the entry point into the workforce ecosystem for job seekers historically excluded from economic advancement. Research shows that providers can have a powerful impact when they combine in-demand job skills preparation, strong relationships with quality employers, and connections to other community resources. To be more responsive to changing needs, it's important that CBOs strengthen their capacity to use data and feedback for evaluation and strategic improvement. It's equally critical that they have regular access to knowledge about effective strategies and practices from both peers and experts in the field.

Core Services

Developing CBO provider capacity: Continuously improving program services and practices with the use of disaggregated data, a racial equity lens, and coaching is critical for CBOs and the people they serve. Through [The Workforce Benchmarking Network \(WBN\)](#), we provide virtual or in-person technical assistance to CBOs in the following ways:

- Learning cohorts targeted on improvement, with tools and technical assistance for using data and feedback to improve program results, and positioning CBOs to be adaptive and valued players in the workforce system.
- Facilitated workshops and forums, with engaging peer learning around key program topics.
- Practice guidelines such as the [WBN "Success Drivers" framework](#) to inform program strategies.

Facilitating national workforce professionals learning and networking: CSW brings service providers from their own "backyards" and connects them with peers, public and private funders, and other resources for learning and collaboration. We design peer exchange events, expert workshops, learning academies, and communities of practice on key workforce topics.

Learn more about our upcoming [Detroit Workforce Leadership Academy](#)

Collecting and analyzing program data: We offer comprehensive surveys, targeted research, and staff coaching to turn program data and constituent/customer feedback into useful information to improve the equity of program results.

- The national WBN survey provides confidential information on CBO program services and results, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender, with interactive comparison reports. [Learn more about the national survey here.](#)

Sharing lessons and tools for the field: CSW is creating new platforms to share its continuous improvement and labor market information tools, as well as other relevant resources and implementation lessons, to assist organizations with planning, operationalizing, and monitoring effective practices.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION

Access to findings on outcomes and best practices is essential to help workforce development leaders, practitioners, educators, and other community stakeholders make better decisions about how to serve customers and invest limited resources. While research and evaluation are embedded within all CSW strategies, providing clients with quality labor market information (LMI) data and reports as well as other evaluation and research services is also a core strategy. For CSW, “quality” research and evaluation equals data collection, analysis, and reporting that embeds a racial equity lens and is culturally responsive, ethical, and grounded in current best practices, as well as designed and conducted by staff with workforce development, education, and social service experience.

Core Services

Providing LMI data collection, reporting, and support: CSW assists organizations in collecting and reporting LMI to answer key questions tied to their local workforce development system to support data-driven decision making and resource investment. We regularly collect and report Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data and we have access to and familiarity with key subscription labor market services. Examples of our work include:

- Workforce system mapping projects
- Demand research on top industries and occupations
- Supply research around workers’ skills and demographics
- Resources and support for organizations to collect and use these data on their own. See CSW’s JPMorgan Chase-funded resource [Understanding Your Community: Labor Market and Workforce Development System Data Toolkit](#).

Mapping career pathways: Tied to our LMI data collection and reporting, CSW offers partners the ability to develop stakeholder-validated career pathway maps that reflect demand in their region. We are experienced in tailoring pathway maps to meet our clients’ needs, including designing maps that only highlight career opportunities that pay living wages or are intended for priority populations. For an example, see our [Food System Career Pathway mapping](#) work with the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems.

Designing and implementing evaluations: CSW has extensive experience conducting evaluations of complex multi-stakeholder workforce and postsecondary initiatives, including workforce board and community college-led projects. We are committed to serving as good partners, co-designing the evaluation to ensure useful findings, and providing thoughtful reflections about progress and outcomes throughout implementation. Our broad workforce development context enables us to provide relevant insights, high-quality products, and on-going continuous improvement support.

Conducting useful research: CSW employs a variety of tailored and current research methodologies grounded in literature and context. We possess expertise in the research and analysis of secondary and primary data. We have experience conducting research to support developing and improving workforce development services and outcomes for priority

populations such as opportunity youth and justice-involved citizens. For more information about our research beyond LMI-specific data collection and analysis, please see our other strategy areas.

TRAUMA & RESILIENCE (T&R) AT WORK

The CSW Trauma and Resilience at Work team advances workplaces and workforces that are culturally responsive, trauma-informed, resilience-building, and supportive of mental well-being. CSW works with partners and stakeholders to reduce the stigma of trauma and mental health in workforce development and the workplace; educate employees at all levels within organizations on trauma, resilience, and mental health; advance trauma-informed, resilience-building, and mental health supportive organizations and companies; and promote policies and systems that codify and sustain this work.

We work with agencies and organizations in workforce development, human services, adult and post-secondary education, nonprofit employment and training, and related sectors, as well as private-sector employers. We do this work in the context of advancing worker success, racial equity and inclusion, job quality, economic mobility, and fair and safe workplaces.

Core Services

Strategy development: CSW works with funders, agencies, organizations, and employers to develop strategies for advancing trauma-informed and resilience-building approaches in their organizations and in the fields of workforce development, adult education, nonprofit employment and training, and related sectors.

Assessment and training: We provide training on a variety of trauma and resilience topics from introductory 101 sessions to race-based trauma to trauma-informed supervision and organizations.

Organizational coaching and action planning: It is not enough for staff and employees to be trauma-informed; organizational cultures and systems need to support this approach as well. This is why CSW also works with organizations to assess their current trauma-informed and resilience-building state, support them in creating action plans to advance in this journey, and provide technical assistance and coaching.

Research and field-building: Trauma and resilience are new concepts in the workforce development field. CSW is committed to raising awareness, deepening knowledge, and improving practices, policies, and systems throughout the field to be more trauma-informed and resilience-building.

Specific expertise the T&R team is looking for:

- Training for race-based trauma and resilience
- T&R training around leadership and/or organization culture, specifically focused on workforce development and human service-type organizations.
- Black and Hispanic experts who can extend our team and perspectives.

- Developing state-level T&R initiatives, policy academies, etc.

Organization of Response

Present your response in the following order:

- A. Title Page and/or Letter from Respondent
- B. Individual's or Firm's Qualifications
- C. Staff Qualifications (if a Firm is responding)
- D. Previous Experience Examples and References
- E. Cost of services
- F. Certifications
- G. A sample of previous project report or work (not required)

Failure to include all the documents may render the Response non-responsive and the offer may be rejected.

A. Title Page and/or Cover Letter - Recommended (Maximum of 2 pages if including both)

On letterhead, include the name and working address of the respondent submitting a Response, the name and telephone number of the primary company representative to be contacted with reference to the Response, email address for said contact and the date of submission. In addition, the page should contain the following statement: "RFQ – Consulting Services Consultant/Vendor List".

B. Respondent's Qualifications (Maximum of 4 pages)

Identify the strategy area(s) in which you are proposing to do work for. Describe your organization and organizational structure. Specify the number of years the individual or firm has been in business, history of the respondent, and capabilities. Please note experience and knowledge performing services in one or up to five of the strategy team areas; information should include the range of experience and particular areas of expertise. Other items to include:

- Brief description of your methodology or approach for each of the strategy areas you are responding to.
- Demonstrate capacity in building objective, independent and transparent working relationships with clients.
- Provide examples of how the respondent accomplished high quality projects with challenging schedules; completing the work on time and on budget.
- Explain efficiency, effectiveness, use of experts, site visits, innovative ideas such as use of technology, etc. in past work.
- Detail any information that would give the respondent a competitive advantage.

C. Staff Qualifications (Maximum of 2 pages)

Designate who would be the primary liaison with CSW including name, contact information and position with the company.

Include a description of the qualifications and experience of the primary liaison and any other staff on the team. Information should include position with the firm (title if the respondent is an individual), educational background, certifications, and work experience. Provide a description of the role each individual would play in the work proposed.

The respondents/team should clearly demonstrate experience comparable to that required to successfully execute the work described in any of the five strategy areas.

- Describe the availability to meet CSW needs including availability and involvement of experts on specific subject matters.
- Describe your firms staff continuity, i.e. staff turnover. Not applicable if an individual is responding.
- Include resumes as an attachment.

D. Previous Experience Examples and References (Roughly 2 pages)

Describe specific project experience the respondent has in providing similar services that also demonstrates respondent's knowledge of similar services and any outcomes achieved or perceived from clients. Include the specific activities and who you provided these services to (if appropriate to share). Also include the results and/or outcomes of any training or services you provided.

- Provide information about the organizations for which you have provided similar services in the last five (5) years.
- Provide contact name, title, company, address, phone number and email address for three (3) references with whom the respondent has done business with in the last five (5) years.
- References may be questioned about such items as the respondent's overall performance, organization, cooperation, timeliness, and quality. The respondent shall ensure that contact information is current.

E. Cost of Services

Provide cost of services broken down into various fees, a fee-for-service schedule or rates by type of service/activity or by staff person. This can include hourly rates, daily rates or cost per type of activity, etc. This is to provide us with a general sense of pricing; specific pricing would be discussed for specific projects. Describe costs included in those rates and specify any other costs associated with the provision of services under one or more of the strategy areas. A range of fees for different services or training circumstances can be provided as well.

F. Warranty, Guarantee, Certifications

Financial Stability: a) clearly demonstrate qualifications, financial responsibility, and performance capability of the respondent; b) disclose if the respondent has ever filed for bankruptcy, and if applicable, provide information as to the date of the filing, the type of filing, and the resolution.

Describe if the respondent is an equal opportunity employer and maintains a drug free workplace.

By submitting a response to this RFQ, the respondent shall be deemed to represent that it is not in arrears in the payment of any obligation due and owing any state within the United States of America, including the payment of taxes and employee benefits and that it shall not become so in arrears during the term of the contract if selected for contract award.

Ability to travel to different parts of the country to provide trainings or facilitations.

Describe any other relevant warranties, guarantees, and certifications.

J. Sample Reports, PROduct or project work (not required)

If you would like, please provide a copy or copies of sample project work. Links to work can also be included in Section D, Previous Experience. Confidential information to be removed.

Format

The Response shall be no more than 11 pages, not including any sample reports, products or work and resumes. The final response should be submitted in a PDF format.

Evaluation Criteria:

CSW will specifically evaluate Responses, as determined by the following criteria:

- 10% - Demonstrated understanding of the Scope of Work
- 30% - Demonstrated experience and qualifications
- 30% - Past performance of the respondent, including timely completion of projects, compliance with the scope of work performed within budgetary limitations, and user satisfaction
- 10% - Composition of the staff assigned to the performance of these services and their qualifications and experience with relevant services such as that being proposed; Adequacy of personnel to accomplish the proposed scope of work within the schedule indicated.
- 15% - Cost
- 5% - References

CSW acknowledges that selecting best value providers primarily requires a balanced combination of (1) reasonable rates and the availability of flat fees, blended rates and caps on fees, and (2) strong experience and demonstrated expertise in providing the services proposed.

CSW, will utilize information submitted to evaluate Responses. Each submission will be reviewed for responsiveness. Qualified Responses shall be evaluated in accordance with the specifications and evaluation criteria contained herein. Respondents whose Responses are classified by the Screening Committee as non-responsive shall be notified.

CSW may make such investigations as are deemed necessary to determine the ability of a respondent to provide the work as specified herein.

CSW reserves the right to clarify or request additional information, presentations and/or demonstrations for clarification in order to understand the respondent's qualifications.

The selection process could include a brief conversation with candidates.

CSW reserves the right to negotiate or modify any element of the Response to ensure that the best possible arrangement for achieving the stated purpose is obtained.

Submission

Submit responses to Debbie Charlton, CSW's Senior Support Specialist and Board Secretary, via electronic submission at dcharlton@skilledwork.org.

Final Responses may not be altered, withdrawn, or canceled, without prior notification to CSW for a period of 120 days after the time and date designated for receipt of final Responses.

CSW reserves the right to contact any and all respondents to verify information included in their Response and to clarify any questions regarding the information submitted in the Response, in order to ascertain whether the Response received is both responsive and responsible. CSW also reserves the right to waive any formalities, informalities and technicalities in evaluation of the Responses as are deemed appropriate, necessary and in CSW's best interest.

IMPORTANT: Your response may be considered Not Responsible or Non-Responsive if any portion of these instructions is not complete.