



Metro Denver WIRED Initiative

Sustainability Planning Research Project

Request For Proposal

Overview

The Metro Denver WIRED Initiative is issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Sustainability Planning Research Project (SPRP) to assist the Initiative with its development of a post-WIRED Regional Talent Development Model (TDM). The RFP seeks bidders who have research experience on economic, workforce, talent development, and/or sustainability planning topics, and who can offer a methodology that references and analyzes both regional and national case studies and data.

Background

In February of 2006, the Metro Denver region (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, Larimer and Weld counties) was awarded a four-year, \$15M Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

WIRED addresses the critical role talent development plays in creating effective regional economic development strategies. The intent of WIRED is to go beyond traditional strategies for worker preparation by bringing together state, local and federal entities, the public workforce system, academic institutions, investment groups, foundations, and business and industry to address the challenges associated with building a globally competitive, well prepared workforce.

The Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation is the lead organization in the Metro Denver WIRED Initiative; -- a regional partnership among industry, economic development, education and the public workforce system to connect Colorado's home-grown skilled workforce with the best jobs that the economy is producing. Metro Denver WIRED focuses on strengthening the talent pipeline at all levels to produce a workforce skilled in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) for some of the region's fastest growing, high-wage industries that are also experiencing labor shortages: aerospace, bioscience, energy, and IT/software.

Purpose

The Metro Denver WIRED grant period will end in January 2010. As part of the Initiative's sustainability planning, WIRED partners in early 2008 formed a "Metro Denver 2010" planning team to consider how WIRED's goals and structure/framework will evolve after the grant ends. The 2010 Team recommended that to best-serve the region's needs, WIRED's successor needs to be:

A transformational, industry-driven talent development model that promotes:

- *Program and policy connections among industry, economic development, education and the workforce system;*
- *A dynamic framework for post-secondary and career-readiness skills development to meet local industry needs within a globally competitive environment;*
- *Optimal talent development programs for incumbent workers and the under-employed, with an emphasis on in-demand and transferable skills;*
- *A dynamic P-20 education system that produces a robust supply of STEM-competent high school and post-secondary graduates.*

To provide a foundation for the model's future structure, the 2010 Team identified a set of criteria, consisting of attributes, competencies, approaches, key outcomes and success measures required for the TDM to be successful.

WIRED is therefore seeking a qualified organization to use this criteria to develop a Metro Denver WIRED Sustainability Planning Research Project (SPRP) that will equip WIRED and its partners with strategic resources to create a structure that develops WIRED's successful talent development practices into a sustainable and transformational regional talent development model.

By exploring examples of promising talent development systems beyond the Metro Denver region, and combining with new ways to maximize the potential of the region's existing talent development structures, the Metro Denver SPRP is intended to support the development of a truly transformational regional talent development system.

Scope of Work

The Metro Denver WIRED SPRP will:

1. Review the Metro Denver region's many existing programs, networks, and organizations with an existing focus on some aspect of talent development (as identified in the 2010 Team's list of ["Existing Regional Talent Development Initiatives"](#)), and evaluate their success in addressing WIRED's required TDM criteria;
2. Provide examples of promising practices and case studies of TDMs, locally and nationwide, that successfully address, or are capable of supporting WIRED's TDM criteria;

3. Provide an analysis that describes:

- a. How promising practices from TDMs outside the WIRED region that successfully address WIRED's TDM criteria can be adapted to, or replicated within, the Metro Denver region's existing talent development systems;
- b. How the region's existing talent development systems could be restructured or realigned to accommodate WIRED's TDM criteria.

The analysis should include, where applicable:

- a. Descriptions of potential challenges/barriers to adapting or replicating successful TDMs (or realigning existing local talent development systems) in the Metro Denver region. Where appropriate, the analysis should also include examples of case studies that highlight potential strategies for successfully overcoming such challenges/barriers.
 - b. A suggested roadmap, and an estimated timeframe, for developing a post-WIRED TDM that either adapts or replicates promising practices from TDMs outside the WIRED region, or is based upon restructuring the region's existing talent development system. This should include recommendations regarding the size/staffing requirements of potential TDM structure(s).
4. Provide examples of sustainable funding structures/models capable of supporting the post-WIRED TDM. These examples should also demonstrate capacity for long-term strategic planning.

The Metro Denver WIRED SPRP will focus on identifying examples and elements of TDMs (both locally and from outside the region) that successfully incorporate and/or have the capacity to support, the following criteria identified by the WIRED 2010 Team:

- a. Criteria required for the post-WIRED regional TDM to be successfully Industry-Driven:
 - Provides Added Value (i.e. is toolbox of resources, incorporates a low hassle factor, is a policy advocate for industry).
 - Creates appropriate risk and reward system in response to meeting industry's workforce needs, including benefits of long-term vs. short-term training.
 - Speaks industry's language.
 - Is presented as a business plan/model.
 - Is a relevant resource.
 - Is cost effective.
 - Is results driven, demonstrating return on investment (ROI) through predefined metrics.
 - Recognizes specific/individual industry/sector needs, possessing targeted industry knowledge.
 - Is responsive - reacts swiftly to changes/increases in industry demand.
 - Is equipped to incorporate and share key learning points throughout Colorado and other economic development communities looking to replicate Metro Denver's WIRED program.

- Is data-driven to prove results/outcome/relevancy, utilizing small business technology resources or internship programs to assist with data capture and briefings.
- Has access to policy makers/implementers.
- Addresses budget issues, and is fiscally responsible.
- Is administered by an agency that is respected and trusted by partners and stakeholders.
- Implements clear performance metrics.
- Is aware of cultural issues.

b. Criteria required for the post-WIRED regional TDM to be successfully Transformational:

- **Is able to develop and support a sustained “feedback loop” (FL) among education, industry, the workforce system and economic development. This loop would support continuous communication of workforce demand and supply issues among all talent development stakeholders at local, state and federal level. (This criteria was identified as being the most critical to include).**

The FL would facilitate a sustained strategic partnership that actively works to continuously assess the regional economy and refine collaborative strategies, setting the stage for better leveraging of both public and private resources. The FL should also include routine evaluation that allows for refinement over time based on new circumstances.

- Rationalizes and aligns initiatives and programs within the existing regional network to promote a smarter Talent Development structure for the region.
- Buy-in from industry is a requirement for the FL to synchronize. Therefore, identifying these stakeholders will be key to transformational success.
- Is a results-oriented model.
- Is structured so that every team/committee is led by a for-profit business leader.
- Develops sustained industry support and commitment for a regional, business-recognized “work-ready” certificate.
- Employs a communication strategy that features key messaging directly from industry.

c. Criteria required for the post-WIRED regional TDM to successfully “Promote Program and Policy connections among industry, economic development, education and the workforce system”:

- Harnesses statewide, congressional leadership for initiatives.
- Supports alignment of federal initiatives.
- Delivers consistent messaging, via a communication structure that demonstrates a deep awareness of the issues.
- Is able to prioritize and identify key programs and priorities.
- Is able to solicit stakeholder buy-in and agreement.

- Incorporates time-limited participation and succession planning within structure, and clearly identified roles for participants.
 - Continues to conduct high quality, relevant, research and is capable of translating into action.
 - Supports review of policy barriers to non-traditional students.
 - Supports development of non-traditional “fast-track” to teaching licensure.
 - Supports cost analysis of regional talent development training & education, including:
 - projected input costs vs. actual output costs (including balancing actual cost with projected social costs).
 - cost benefit to industry from education training program partnerships.
 - recognition of talent development as continuous process, and support of tax credits and other policy incentives for industry participation. Develops messaging that:
 - incorporates three or four main points for each key target group.
 - includes key message from industry as a statement on talent development.
 - aligns federal, state and local messaging (or identifies areas of divergence).
- d. Criteria required for the post-WIRED regional TDM to successfully “Promote a dynamic framework for post-secondary and/or career-readiness skills development to meet local industry needs within a globally competitive environment”:
- Effectively communicates what post-secondary and career-readiness means, who it involves and why it’s important.
 - Promotes statewide measure/certification of career-readiness success (e.g. Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids [CAP4K]).
 - Partners with industry to ensure definition of career-readiness remains up-to-date.
 - Is a driving force in engaging more private funding and industry support for activity both inside and outside of the classroom.
 - Is able to access and engage individuals at all stages of the workforce pipeline.
 - Is able to access and engage educators.
 - Has the capacity to incorporate promotion of apprenticeships within framework.
- e. Criteria required for the post-WIRED regional TDM to successfully “Promote optimal Talent Development programs for incumbent workers and the under-employed, with an emphasis on in-demand and transferable skills”:
- Has the capacity to support replication of successful programs.
 - Is able to plan programs that meet industry’s needs.
 - Incorporates a flexible infrastructure, i.e. able to support year-round program enrollment.
 - Develops substantial and sustained industry partnerships.
 - Demonstrates industry knowledge/awareness on part of program providers.

- Is able to effectively access and engage sources of untapped talent.
- f. Criteria required for the post-WIRED regional TDM to successfully “Promote a dynamic P-20 education system that produces a robust supply of STEM-competent high school and post-secondary graduates”:
- Has the capacity to develop and support a STEM roadmap for students, and roadmap training for education providers.
 - Defines and incorporates soft skill and business skill requirements into the education system.
 - Supports a pro-active educational requirement strategy for good occupational demand data.
 - Establishes a supply goal and track progress over 1/3/5 year timeframe.
 - Creates and supports cross-sector STEM skills capacity.
 - Focuses on CTE and adult education schools also.
 - Has the capacity for ongoing evaluation: develop and maintain a “Metrics Dashboard” that routinely measures:
 - Regional output of qualified workers
 - Who industry is employing, and from where
 - Number of top CO students retained as teachers
 - Measures that successfully support/increase children’s outcomes
 - Evidence of transformation, such as increased social networking among the various systems, evidence of leveraged resources
 - Other measures as determined by TDM partners’ leaders
 - Communicates opportunities, and career pathway models, for STEM jobs.
- g. Key outcomes and measures of success required of the post-WIRED regional TDM:
- Develops and sustains a “Metrics Dashboard” (as identified in section f. above).
 - Uses data from Metrics Dashboard to produce an annual Report Card on the region’s talent development pool, that also includes updates on overcoming policy barriers and increased local student participation in the workforce.
 - “Owns” the metrics results – i.e. performs the role of external auditor.
 - Performs regular (perhaps every other year) review of industry workforce demand and local supply:
 - Demand-side data to include number of open positions, fill rates, and whether filled locally. Also utilize economic development metrics – i.e. new companies and STEM jobs coming to Colorado.
 - Supply-side data to include number of qualifications gained at *exit* of education program or training, and include all stages of the pipeline (i.e. adults, displaced workers, lifelong learners).
 - Measures industry’s spending on training, including what percentage is remedial, and what is investment in re-training/up-skilling.

- Successfully manages industry's understanding, sustained buy-in and active participation in the region's Talent Development Model.
- Tracks and increases the STEM teacher pool.
- Increases student math and reading skills.
- Proactively tracks and captures industry trends (including existing industry analyses) and push-points to evaluate future workforce supply needs.
- Promotes and shares promising practices and practitioner implications for regional activities.

The research project will begin with an initial meeting between the recipient and WIRED staff and partners to ensure that all parties are in agreement as to project terms. After the initial meeting, the recipient will submit a final work plan to WIRED for review and approval. Throughout the project period there will be regular contact between WIRED staff and the recipient for updates on project progress.

The performance period will be ten weeks from contract to preliminary draft report, and another two weeks to a final report.

Research methodologies may include phone survey, online survey, focus groups, individual interviews, and others.

Deliverables

Deliverables will include preliminary and final reports, and a presentation to WIRED Staff and partners (with PowerPoint summary). The recipient should publish a minimum of 10 copies of the report.

Metro Denver WIRED shall also receive one electronic copy of the report suitable for posting to its web site, and one electronic copy of all data and other materials used in the analysis suitable for confirmatory purposes.

Availability of Funds

Up to \$150,000 will be available for the WIRED Sustainability Planning Research Project. In all cases, WIRED reserves the right to negotiate the contract amount, or other details of a proposed project, to meet the required deliverables of the WIRED Sustainability Planning Research Project.

Letter of Intent to Propose

The Metro Denver WIRED SPRP requires submission of a **Letter of Intent to Propose** from each organization that will be submitting a grant proposal. Letters of Intent must be received by WIRED no later than 4:30 PM (local/Mountain Standard Time), Monday, January 5th, 2009. Organizations that fail to submit a Letter of Intent to Propose will be disallowed from submitting a proposal for the Metro Denver WIRED Sustainability Planning Research Project.

Letters of Intent to Propose must include the following information:

1. Identification of the lead organization and contracting agent;
2. A brief description of the research methodology proposed;
3. Preliminary estimate of project cost;
4. Contact information for the individual responsible for the anticipated proposal.

Letters of Intent to Propose may be submitted electronically to WIRED@metrodenver.org, in-person, and by mail, fax or other delivery service to:

**Metro Denver WIRED Initiative
Sustainability Planning Research Project Intent to Propose
Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
1445 Market Street
Denver, CO 80202
303-534-3200 FAX**

Proposal Format

The proposal deadline is 4:30 PM (local/Mountain Standard Time) on Friday, January 23rd, 2009.

The proposal must be a Microsoft Word document no longer than 10 (ten) typewritten pages. The proposal should include a research plan, methodologies, and preliminary budget estimates for a research project that would return the information and analysis identified in the scope of work above.

The proposal should also include a description of the applicant's qualifications and experience as they relate to sustainability planning, economic development, and workforce/talent development projects on regional and national scales.

Applicants are requested to submit 3 (three) paper copies of the proposal, and 1 (one) PDF file copy on CD.

Send printed copies of the proposal and PDF copy on CD to:

**Ledy Garcia-Eckstein, Executive Director
Metro Denver WIRED Initiative
Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
1445 Market Street
Denver, CO 80202**

Proposals that do not follow the required submission format and page limitations, or that are received after 4:30 PM (local/Mountain Standard Time) on Friday, January 23rd, 2009 will not be considered for funding.

Questions

No phone calls will be accepted.

Organizations preparing responses to this RFP may submit questions regarding the RFP and its requirements by email to WIRED@metrodenver.org. The deadline for all questions is 4:30 PM (local/Mountain Standard Time), Monday, January 5th, 2009. Questions submitted after this deadline will not receive a response. Responses to questions will be provided as promptly as possible after receipt, and no later than January 9th, 2009.

Proposal Submission

Proposals are ***due by 4:30 PM (local/Mountain Standard Time), Friday, January 23rd, 2009.***

Please submit the proposal to:

**Ledy Garcia-Eckstein, Executive Director
Metro Denver WIRED Initiative
Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation
1445 Market Street
Denver, CO 80202**

Proposals that are received after 4:30 PM (local/Mountain Standard Time) on Friday January 23rd, 2009 will not be considered for funding.

Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated by staff and partners of the Metro Denver WIRED Initiative. Preference may be given to proposals from organizations with previous survey research experience with workforce, talent development, sustainability planning or economic development projects.

Award

The winning vendor will be notified by February 3rd, 2009, with contracting and work on the Metro Denver WIRED Sustainability Research Project to begin as soon as possible after that date.

Timeline

The following timeline indicates important dates and deadlines for proposals and the SPRP work. All times indicated are local Denver times.

Activity	Day/Date/Time
RFP Released	Wednesday, December 10 th , 2008
Deadline for questions	Monday, January 5 th , 2009
Letters of Intent due	Monday, January 5 th , 2009
Responses to questions	By Friday, January 9 th , 2009
Proposals Due	Friday, January 23rd, 2009 at 4:30 PM At WIRED Initiative Offices Metro Denver EDC, 1445 Market St., Denver, CO 80202
Award Announcement	By February 3 rd , 2009
Contract Development, Signature	By February 13 th , 2009 (approx)
Begin SPRP	Monday, February 16 th , 2009
Submit draft report	Friday, April 24 th , 2009
Submit final report	Friday, May 8 th , 2009

Reference links:

For more in-depth information on the Denver Metro WIRED Initiative, see www.metrodenver.org/wired/.

Metro Denver WIRED is one of 39 WIRED regions in 32 states and Puerto Rico. For more information on activities of the national WIRED program and its other regions see <http://www.doleta.gov/wired/regions/>.

For more background on the charge and recommendations of WIRED's Metro Denver 2010 Solutions Team, please refer to the [Metro Denver 2010 Team's Work Summary](#).

For more information on the public workforce system in the WIRED region (Adams County Workforce & Business Center, Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, Broomfield Workforce Center, Workforce Boulder County, Denver's Division of Workforce Development, Jefferson County Workforce Center, Larimer County Workforce Center, and Employment Services of Weld County), see: <http://www.coworkforce.com/EMP/WFCs.asp>).

A document describing the complaints process for WIRED RFP solicitations and awards can be downloaded from the WIRED website at <http://www.metrodenver.org/workforce-profiles/WIRED/rfp.html>.