



KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL ADDENDUM

SOLICITAION NO.: RFP-0319
ADDENDUM NO.: 1
RFP ISSUE DATE: December 11, 2024
ADDENDUM DATE: December 18, 2024
OPENING DATE: **January 8, 2025, 4:00PM EST**

The following information is being provided in response to questions received for this RFP:

1. Could you provide more information about the program being evaluated?
 - a. **This is an NSF ATE grant titled Securing the Future Workforce: Inclusive Cybersecurity Technician Education for All. (#2350448). This project aims to serve the national interest by creating an inclusive cybersecurity technician education for all at Bluegrass Community and Technical College in order to secure the future cybersecurity workforce. The project intends to address Kentucky's shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals. The project team plans to investigate factors influencing high school and college students' career decisions, identify potential barriers to credential completion, and assess the impact of faculty and peer mentoring on student success. The project team intends to identify effective mentoring attributes in order to effectively recruit skilled technical employees. The project has the potential to increase enrollment in cybersecurity credentials by enhancing access to accurate information for high school students, teachers, and counselors.**

The project will support peer mentors, and summer workshops for high school teachers. A part-time retention and recruitment specialist plans to engage near-peer mentors to support minority and female students by hosting workshops of the cybersecurity career exploration across the college campus. The project team plans to recruit 240 diverse students (including female students and students from groups underrepresented in STEM) from local high schools into a hybrid campus program. This hybrid program includes various activities to expose students to cybersecurity skills, credentials and career pathways. The project will recruit and train 20 teachers or counselors over the life of the project. The project team will provide teachers or counselors with a basic understanding of cybersecurity so that they will be able to facilitate success for high school students enrolled in dual credit cybersecurity courses. The project findings will be disseminated to other community colleges across the state. This project is funded by the Advanced Technological Education program that focuses on the education of technicians for the advanced-technology fields that drive the Nation's

economy.

2. Is the program being evaluated funded by a federal or state grant? If so, could you provide more details about the agency that made the grant? Could you provide BCTC's grant application and/or the evaluation section of the grant application?
 - a. **Federal - We will contract with an outside evaluator to guide monthly formative annual and end-of-project summative evaluation activities.**

Formative and Summative Evaluation: The evaluator will conduct both formative and summative evaluations during the grant period. Evaluation of the project will focus first on outcomes in terms of retention of minority and women students already enrolled in the cybersecurity program and in the increase in enrollment resulting from workshops and recruitment managed by the retention specialist and in collaboration with career staff. A second focus is on the outcomes relating to grades 7-12 students and what they learn about cybersecurity via hands-on experience as well as through mentoring. Finally, the evaluation will focus on acquired insights into the factors shaping student decision-making around cybersecurity and computer science careers. Project evaluation questions will be finalized by the selected evaluator and will align with grant goals and objectives to ultimately assess the extent to which grant efforts strengthened the cybersecurity pipeline from grades 7-12 through to career preparation. These may include critical questions associated with each of these domains of interest. For example, relating to Goal 1: How and in what ways were project activities effective in recruiting/retaining college students into CYS careers? And for Goal 2: To what extent were female and minority students who participated in grant activities interested in cybersecurity career pathways? For Goal 3: To what extent and in what ways did teachers' and counselors' awareness of cybersecurity careers increase? Finally, we will enquire: How did mentoring of grade 7-12 youth change as a result of the training that occurred through the grant?

Data Collection & Analysis: The evaluator will collect data through regular update calls with the grant team on progress and implementation successes and challenges, and surveys to key stakeholders including intervention participants. As appropriate, interviews and/or focus groups may be utilized to collect qualitative data from groups of grant participants such as staff, mentors, and students. Data will be collected as outlined in the plan and compared against baseline data or benchmarked against targets annually and at the end of the grant. Ongoing update calls are used to track program progress, successes, and challenges. Surveys will be utilized to reach a broader group of program stakeholders on all grant objectives, while interviews will allow the evaluator to dig deeper and ask "how?" and "why" grant efforts are occurring. Our evaluation plan will also make use of relevant demographic data that forms part of the college's systematic data collection on all students, so we can link enrollment in classes to gender and race/ethnic identity. We will request such data from the college's IPRE office. The evaluator will provide BCTC with formative feedback related to program components; data will be analyzed as it is collected, and summary reports that highlight key themes, findings, and/or recommendations will be prepared in accordance with the final evaluation plan. These reports will provide timely feedback to BCTC that can be used for continuous improvement.

The evaluator will discuss findings during evaluation update calls and note how BCTC uses the evaluation findings to improve program delivery. Annual reports, which are the summation of all summary reports provided in each program year, will be provided to BCTC. Annually, the evaluator will review available program outcome data provided by BCTC and benchmark it against the targets in the narrative, and during the final year, will compare outcome data against the goals and deliverables stated in the grant narrative. A final summative report will document progress, program changes, successes, challenges, and other evaluation findings and will be delivered near the end of the grant.

3. Is there a logic model, theory of action, or evaluation framework for this project?
 - a. **See answer to question #2.**
4. The RFP mentions that the project evaluation questions will be aligned with the grant goals and objectives. Can you specifically describe the grant goals and objectives?
 - a. **See answer to question #2.**
5. The RFP mentions college students and grades 7-12 students. Who are the participants of the program being evaluated, and to what extent should we expect them to be engaged in the evaluation?
 - a. **They are Central Kentucky high school and middle school students that complete cybersecurity course(s).**

The proposed project devotes considerable effort to the collection and analysis of the impact of different activities. Mentoring is proposed that follows findings reported elsewhere suggesting that mentor and mentee share life experiences. For this reason, our mentoring cohorts are divided into minority high school male, female and grades 7-10, as these groups can benefit from different mentors (minority mentor, female mentor) and comparisons between the groups can be made. Additionally, by teaching each cohort separately in the online component of the teaching activity but uniting them in the on-campus activities we provide a novel opportunity to observe and gauge interactions among these populations and evaluate how they collaborate (or do not collaborate) during the shared on-campus experiences. We propose to get feedback from each cohort about their insights and experiences working across gender, age and ethnic/racial groups as part of our assessment of those factors that shape stereotype threat and male classroom bias. To educate colleagues in Kentucky, one or more of the PIs will present at a regional conference and if possible, a national conference focused on minority students or women in STEM, detailing the project activities and outcomes. Additionally, BCTC hosts an annual conference focused on teaching and learning which is attended by faculty employed at colleges across Kentucky, so a presentation at this conference will alert colleagues to the project activities and findings. Additionally, we will publish an annual report that will be sent to colleagues in other colleges, and which describes the project and the learning outcomes.

6. Could you provide a list of the intended outcomes of this project?
 - a. **See answer to question #2.**

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7. Could you provide details about the budget for this evaluation?
 - a. **This information is not available. Please provide your firm's best offer for this initiative.**
8. Is there a preference for interviews or focus groups to be conducted in person, or may they be conducted virtually?
 - a. **They may be conducted virtually.**
9. Can we include costs for compensation for interviewees or focus group participants in our budget?
 - a. **The proposal should be reflective of the entire project's evaluation effort.**
10. What is the duration of the project being evaluated? When did it begin, and when will it end??
 - a. **This project was awarded on May 1, 2024 and will conclude May 1, 2027.**
11. What is the expected duration of the evaluation?
 - a. **This project will end in May 2027.**
12. If the evaluation is multi-year, would you prefer a one-year budget or a single budget for the full evaluation?
 - a. **Please provide a yearly budget.**
13. Does KCTCS have a budget in mind for RFP-0319: Grant Evaluator Services?
 - a. **This information is not available. Please provide your firm's best offer for this initiative.**

14. Section 15.B of the RFP states that “at least one reference should be an institution of higher education.” If a vendor does not have a reference from an institution of higher education, will the vendor be disqualified from consideration?
- a. **Offerors will not be disqualified if no institutions of higher education are referenced; however, it could be favorable to show past history working successfully with an institution of higher education.**
15. Section 15.A of the RFP states, “experiences as it relates to providing the requested services contained herein.” If a vendor does not have specific experience with an institution of higher education, would they be disqualified from bidding on this opportunity?
- a. **Offerors will not be disqualified if no institutions of higher education are referenced; however, it could be favorable to show past history working successfully with an institution of higher education.**
16. Would a vendor’s experience with a State Government Department of Education be considered equivalent to experience with an institution of higher education as referenced in the RFP, per section 15.B?
- a. **Please provide the references your firm feels are best in response to this RFP.**
17. If a vendor does not provide the required three references, will their bid still be considered responsive, or would the vendor be disqualified?
- a. **Offeror will not be disqualified for lack of requested references; however, it could affect KCTCS’ ability to appropriately evaluate a proposal.**
18. Will the awarded vendor of the RFP be required to adhere to the National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) data reporting requirements for the Annual Progress Report and Final Project Report?
- a. **Yes**
19. Could KCTCS specify any tools or software that the Grant team uses, prefers, or requires for data collection and analysis?
- a. **We do not have any required or preferred software.**
20. Are there any specific qualifications or certifications required for staff involved in the project?
- a. **No, but experience working with NSF ATE grants and the Commonwealth of Kentucky would be preferable.**
21. Could KCTCS clarify the specific data security measures needed to comply with its standards?
- a. **Data security would involve FERPA standards. Other data security measures can be discussed with the successful Offeror.**
22. Does KCTCS have any additional compliance requirements beyond those mentioned in the RFP, such as specific state or federal regulations?
- a. **Other than the grant requirements with both state and federal regulations, KCTCS does not have any additional compliance requirements.**
23. Could KCTCS confirm the maximum page limit for proposals?
- a. **Offerors should limit their responses to a maximum page limit of fifty (50) pages.**

Required pages such as signature page (page 1) of the RFP, business classification (section 49) and any associated addendum issued during the solicitation process will not be counted in the total page count of 50-page limit.

24. Section 15, Part G refers to the “Financial Cost Worksheet (Separate Attachment).” However, no related attachments are included in the RFP. Could KCTCS clarify where these attachments, or any others needed for the RFP response, can be found?
- a. **The Financial Cost Worksheet is included in this issued addendum.**
25. Would KCTCS be willing to extend the due date of this RFP by two (2) weeks from January 8, 2025 to January 22, 2025?
- a. **Not at this time.**
26. Does KCTCS have a specific project for which grant evaluation services will be provided, or is this a call for general grant evaluation services?
- a. **This is for an NSF ATE grant funded project, “Securing the Future: Inclusive Cybersecurity for All.”**
27. Can detailed information on the cybersecurity program curriculum and workshops be shared to understand the learning objectives?
- a. **<https://catalog.kctcs.edu/programs-of-study/aas/cybersecurity/cybersecurity-aas/>**
28. When did the grant begin? When is the final year of the grant?
- a. **The grant began May 1, 2024 and will conclude May 1, 2027.**
29. How many students participate each year? Where is it offered? How many locations is it offered in?
- a. **We are anticipating approximately 20 students a year. The project will take place at Bluegrass Community and Technical College’s Newtown Campus.**
30. What is the format of the program (e.g., MS/HS coursework, after school programming, etc.)?
- a. **Coursework is completed through online learning, field trips will occur during the workweek.**
31. Are these programs already in operation, or are they being newly developed or expanded during the grant period?
- a. **The Cybersecurity program has been offered for over 3 years. The grant was awarded in May 2024 and activities began in August 2024.**
32. Are there external organizations or industry partners involved in the program, and what role do they play?
- a. **We are working with several external organizations. We will be including them in field trips and as part of a new BILT (Business and Industry Leadership Team).**
33. Are there specific benchmarks or performance indicators beyond retention and enrollment that KCTCS prioritizes for assessing program success?
- a. **See answer to question #2.**

34. What baseline demographic and program data will be provided to the evaluator at the start of the project?
- a. **Any demographic or program data will be shared with the evaluator as requested.**
35. What mechanisms are in place to access institutional data, and will the evaluator have direct access to databases or need to rely on data requests?
- a. **There is a data request process that the PI can assist with.**
36. Who are the key stakeholders (e.g., program staff, mentors, students) available for interviews, focus groups, and surveys?
- a. **See answer to question #2.**
37. Are site visits or in-person observations required or preferred for data collection? If so, how frequently?
- a. **Not at this time.**
38. Does KCTCS have existing survey tools or preferences for specific survey platforms?
- a. **None that I am aware of.**
39. Will the evaluation activities require IRB approval, and will KCTCS assist in obtaining this?
- a. **The initial IRB approval is completed. If changes occur IRB will be**
40. Are there any fixed milestones or deadlines for specific deliverables (e.g., annual reports, final summative report)?
- a. **Yearly reports must be submitted to NSF the first Thursday in October.**
41. Are there specific reporting requirements to federal grant agencies that the evaluator must adhere to?
- a. **The evaluator must follow the NSF ATE reporting requirements.**
42. Are there specific budget limitations or allocations for evaluation activities?
- a. **No.**
43. Is there an opportunity to extend the evaluation contract beyond the grant period?
- a. **This RFP is specific to the evaluation services of this grant. The evaluation services will not extend beyond the grant period.**
44. Page 6 of the RFP states that the proposal should be a maximum of 25 pages, but page 8 states that there is a 50-page limit. Please clarify what the proposal page limit is.
- a. **Offerors should limit their responses to a maximum page limit of fifty (50) pages. Required pages such as signature page (page 1) of the RFP, business classification (section 49) and any associated addendum issued during the solicitation process will not be counted in the total page count of 50-page limit.**
45. Can a proposer include appendices that do not count toward the maximum page limit?
- a. **Appendices should count toward the maximum page limit.**

46. Can an umbrella policy be used to satisfy any insurance coverage that a firm does not meet? Our firm has \$2,000,000 general aggregate insurance, but the RFP requires \$3,000,000. Can our \$5,000,000 umbrella policy be used to cover the difference?

a. **KCTCS can discuss this with the successful Offeror.**

47. Will there be a preference for evaluators who have worked with Kentucky Community and Technical College System or Bluegrass Community and Technical College previously?

a. **The RFP responses are evaluated without preference or bias.**

48. Does the evaluator need to have a Kentucky business license?

a. **The successful Offeror is required to register with the Secretary of State for the Commonwealth of Kentucky.**

49. Is this an RFP to conduct to the evaluation of the NSF-funded, "Securing the Future: Inclusive Cybersecurity Education for All"

([https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=2350448??](https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=2350448?))

a. **Yes.**

50. If yes to the previous question (#49), can you share the evaluation plan submitted in the NSF application?

a. **See answer to question #2.**

51. Can all evaluation activities occur virtually?

a. **Yes.**

52. Should the evaluation activities be planned from February 2025 through April 2027?

a. **Yes.**

53. Are project years from May 1st to April 30th each year of the grant?

a. **Yes.**

54. What grant activities does BCTC expect to have implemented in Year 1?

a. **See answer to question # 2.**

55. When are annual performance reports due?

a. **Annual reviews are due to the NSF by the first Thursday in October.**

56. Who wrote the evaluation plan included in the grant application?

a. **A team consisting of the BCTC PI, Co-PIs, and grant writer. It has been reviewed by others.**

57. What is the budget or budget range for this evaluation?

a. **This information is not available. Please provide your firm's best offer for this initiative.**

58. Are there any budget restrictions such as a cap on indirect costs?

a. **All costs should be included in the financial proposal total cost.**

59. Are incentives for survey and/or focus group participants allowed? If so, are there any restrictions (e.g., amount and type)?
- a. **We do not have plans to offer any incentives.**
60. Are there any formatting requirements for the proposal aside from the page limits such as paragraph spacing, font, font size, page margins, etc.?
- a. **There is a requested page limit of 50 pages. No other formatting requirements are imposed.**
61. Should the evaluator plan to seek approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB)?
- a. **Our initial IRB approval is complete; however, if needed, additional reviews may be done.**
62. Would this evaluation work need to go through a research approval process for the high schools involved?
- a. **If needed; however, the PI and Co-PI's would assist with the process.**
63. Should evaluation materials (e.g., surveys) be made available in languages other than English?
- a. **Maybe depending on the participants.**
64. Where can we find a copy of the financial cost worksheet?
- a. **The Financial Cost Worksheet is included in this issued addendum.**
65. Can you confirm that the first page of the RFP is the signature page that should be submitted with the proposal?
- a. **The first page of the RFP is the signature page that should be submitted with the proposal. This page is not included in the page count.**
66. Is the maximum page length 25 pages (as stated on page 6) or 50 pages (as stated on page 8)?
- a. **Offerors should limit their responses to a maximum page limit of fifty (50) pages. Required pages such as signature page (page 1) of the RFP, business classification (section 49) and any associated addendum issued during the solicitation process will not be counted in the total page count of 50-page limit.**
67. Where do the signature page and business classification get included in the proposal?
- a. **This can be attached at the beginning or the end of the proposal if the Offeror desires.**
68. Can you confirm if the grant to be evaluated is [this one](#)? If so, was a specific evaluator named included in the original proposal to NSF?
- a. **Yes, that is the correct proposal. We noted in our proposal that KCTCS will be conducting a Request for Proposal to secure the best outside evaluator for the available funds requested in our budget.**
69. Can you provide any information about the budget range for this project?
- a. **This information is not available. Please provide your firm's best offer for this initiative.**

Bidders must acknowledge receipt of this and any addenda either with solicitation or by separate letter or email prior to award of contract. If by separate letter, the following information should be placed in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope:

RFP No.: **RFP-0319**
Title: Grant Evaluator Services

Name of Firm: _____

Authorized Signature: _____