

# **Request for Interest**

## **Job Quality Best Practices in support of Direct Care Workforce Initiative**

**RFI Release Day:**

April 30, 2024

**Responses Due:**

Rolling until December 31, 2024

Partner4Work  
650 Smithfield Street, Suite 2400  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Any agreements resulting from this RFI will be funded 100% through Non-Federal Funding up to \$50,000 via Partner4Work as the grant recipient and 0% through Federal Funding up to \$0.

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## SUMMARY

As the Workforce Development Board for the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Partner4Work is committed to supporting local employers in recruiting, training, and retaining talent while connecting workers with good jobs. For more information, please see the “About Partner4Work” section on page 7. This Request for Information (“RFI”) will focus on the Direct Care Workforce, which includes home health aides, personal care aides, and similar roles. Partner4Work seeks to collaborate closely with selected employers to strengthen the pipeline into these roles and stabilize the workforce through the development of career pathways and implementation of retention strategies that improve job quality.

Planning grants under this RFI will support the co-development of a tailored workforce strategy, in partnership with Partner4work, for each selected employer that includes a retention and job quality improvement plan for direct care workers. Planning grant recipients that successfully complete this phase will be invited to apply for an implementation grant. Organizations who participated in the CHC PAC Learning Collaborative will be given bonus points on their application.

## BACKGROUND

Current policies and practices have created challenges within the Direct Care workforce nationally:

- Turnover rates are estimated at 40-60% annually
- Average job posting takes 32 days to fill in Allegheny County
- 75% of Direct Care workers in Allegheny County make below the self-sufficiency wage and the top 10% of Direct Care workers make less than \$40,000 annually
- There is a perceived lack of clear and direct career pathways

These conditions make it difficult for employers with direct care worker roles to maintain a stable workforce, ultimately impacting the quality of patient care. In light of these challenges, Partner4Work seeks strong employer partners as we dedicate significant resources over the next two to four years to build a stable direct care workforce, with a focus on recruitment, career progression and retention through job quality. Partner4Work is committed to working with employer partners who are ready to embrace innovative ideas that will lead to becoming great places to work, resulting in higher rates of retention and improvements in recruiting. Partner4Work will lead selected employers through the development of a workforce strategy that will include establishing meaningful connections to local PA CareerLink® offices and partners, creating intentional career pathways for workers to advance, and using worker surveys to develop a job quality implementation plan that aligns with organizational goals and fits within identified constraints.

Employers that successfully complete this planning grant will be invited to apply for an implementation grant to receive additional support in bringing the plans to life. During implementation, PA CareerLink® will deliver on workforce recruitment strategies and will provide career navigation and supportive services to new hires and other qualified individuals as needed. Employees will be connected with industry-aligned training where possible, and job quality implementation support will be offered by Partner4work and/or organizational partners. These factors will ultimately lead to business benefits that include becoming more competitive in attracting talent and increased retention, productivity, and innovation.

### **Program Dates**

The process of securing the initial agreements resulting from this RFI is estimated to begin in or around June 2024 and extend until implementation begins. We intend for implementation activities to begin no more than 6 months after the planning phase but recognize that every employer is different and will adjust timelines accordingly. Organizations that successfully complete the planning grant process will be eligible for implementation funding, with an initial implementation grant running through June 30, 2025, with potential to extend if further funding is made available. The

second and third contract periods are renewable at the sole discretion of Partner4Work. Partner4Work reserves the option to modify contracts on a year-to-year basis. The agreement is not renewable after June 30, 2026.

## Anticipated Awards

As a result of this RFI, Partner4Work expects to award multiple planning grants, ranging from \$3,000 to \$6,000. All costs must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the planned functions, allowable, and allocable to the contract/cost categories. Selected proposals will contain evidence of leadership buy-in to project and implementation of [job quality frameworks](#).<sup>1</sup> Partner4Work reserves the right to vary or change the terms of any contract resulting from this RFI, including funding levels, scope of work, performance standards, and contract period length as it deems necessary and in the best interests of Partner4Work. The proposal(s) most in alignment with the goals of this project and most advantageous in terms of quality and cost will be recommended for funding. Partner4Work may choose to make additional funding sources available through contracts resulting from this RFI, based on availability and allowability.

## Planning Grant Payments

Successful bidders may invoice for monthly retainers during the planning grant process. If an organization demonstrates commitment to creating a job quality implementation plan, the organization will continue to be eligible for monthly payments of no more than \$6,000 total. Selected applicants must also be up-to-date with all contract reporting and documentation requirements in order to receive payment.

## SCOPE OF WORK

The following Scope of Work presents a description of the programmatic and administrative requirements applicable to any contract resulting from this RFI. The selected applicant, referred to as “CONTRACTOR” below, will be required to comply with all standards described herein.

Successful bidders (hereafter “CONTRACTOR”) will coordinate efforts with Partner4Work and PA CareerLink® as described in this Scope of Work. CONTRACTOR will designate a single point of contact to coordinate communication, information-sharing, and reporting efforts. Partner4Work will assist CONTRACTOR with the development of a plan to:

- Create intentional career lattices
- Survey workers to identify areas for job quality improvement
- Implement robust job quality improvements
- Establish meaningful connections to local PA CareerLink® offices and partners

### 1. Recruitment

CONTRACTOR will work with Partner4Work and PA CareerLink® to establish a successful candidate profile for recruitment and identify common supportive service needs of potential employees. CONTRACTOR will agree to utilize the public workforce development system to post job postings and accept referrals of qualified candidates. **For more information on PA CareerLink® please see Page 7.** While PA CareerLink® and Partner4Work will assist with recruitment, CONTRACTOR is ultimately responsible for facilitating employee connection to meaningful job quality best practices and future career advancement opportunities, while cultivating a steady pipeline of new applicants and employees. These improvements aim to enhance satisfaction and long-term career opportunities for employees, as well as lower turnover rates and increase the quality of employees for employers.

### 2. Supports

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.partner4work.org/document/3rwib-self-sufficiency-policy/>

CONTRACTOR will coordinate with PA CareerLink® and Partner4Work to identify qualified candidates, including, when possible, recruiting from high priority populations as identified by Partner4Work. CONTRACTOR will refer employees to PA CareerLink® as needed for additional support related to employment and training. Partner4Work, PA CareerLink®, and CONTRACTOR will work together to create a process for determining if employees are eligible and suitable for PA CareerLink services, with the option for group or individual formats, through in-person or remote platforms.

Employees of CONTRACTOR that are enrolled in PA CareerLink® services will have access to career services, supportive services, job placement assistance, follow up services, and other resources provided by PA CareerLink® staff as is appropriate. CONTRACTOR will work to ensure all enrolled employees can take full advantage of PA CareerLink® services. PA CareerLink® staff will define information-sharing requirements that CONTRACTOR must follow to assist in meeting reporting requirements for the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS).

### 3. Partner Collaboration

Partner4Work, CONTRACTOR, and PA CareerLink® will collaborate to identify challenges and advance solutions that benefit the sector as a whole. Such efforts strive to strengthen the relationship between PA CareerLink® and the employer, and increase PA CareerLink®'s ability to meet employer needs through robust employment and training support for job seekers.

## WHO SHOULD RESPOND

Ideal partners include non-profit and for-profit organizations that employ workers with Direct Care Work responsibilities. Direct-care workers are classified as “workers who provide home care services, such as certified nursing assistants, home health aides, personal care aides, caregivers, and companions” (DOL, 2015). While a majority of direct-care workers work in home and community settings, direct-care workers can also work in nursing care facilities and hospitals (Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, 2011). Eligible applications must be in good standing with the federal government, have proof of insurance, and an Unique Entity Identification (“UEI”, previously known as a “DUNS number”). All applicants must be committed to paying their employees at least \$14.21 an hour, or the median wage for this role, at the time of award and be willing to collaborate with Partner4Work and PA CareerLink® to increase job quality and advancement opportunities for their employees. Organizations currently barred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by a Federal, State, City or County department/agency, quasi-governmental agency, or Partner4Work are ineligible to apply.

## HOW TO RESPOND

Submissions should be sent to Partner4Work beginning on May 13, 2024 at 12:01 am ET at [RFP@partner4work.org](mailto:RFP@partner4work.org). Emails must have the subject line “Proposal, Direct Care Worker [Organization name].” Late or incomplete proposals will not be considered. Proposals must be submitted in 11-point, Calibri font, double-spaced with 1-inch page margins. Your proposal may not be considered if page limitations and formatting requirements are not met. Required attachments will not count toward the page limitations established below. Your proposal must contain all the content below in the same general order illustrated. Strong proposals will demonstrate a full understanding of the requirements described throughout this RFI and establish the capacity, experience, and program design needed to meet the required standards and goals.

Partner4Work will review applications on a rolling basis and applicants can expect to receive a response within 1 month of submission:

1. **Cover Sheet** – Use template provided. (See Partner4Work’s webpage for this RFI)
2. **Executive Summary** (maximum 2 pages) – Include each of the following:

- a. Organizational Description
  - i. Basic organizational description, including but not limited to: Year established, legal status, mission, principal programs and services, executive leadership, annual budget, starting wages for direct care workers, and number of full-time staff.
  - ii. Administrative and fiscal capacity, including but not limited to: Your organization’s proven ability to provide fiscal support and oversight, utilize information systems, manage resources and personnel, and produce timely and accurate reports.
- b. Problem Statement
  - i. Overview of challenges experienced with regards to current staffing structure and levels related to direct care work. This could include, but is not limited to: Turnover rates, average time to fill postings, number of open positions by employee classification, frequency and duration of full staffing levels, and major reasons for resignations.
  - ii. Brief review of previous efforts to increase staffing and address staff retention.
- c. Initial Goals
  - i. Identification of areas to be addressed by this project and tangible goals wished to be achieved

**Timeline** (all dates are subject to change):

Release of RFI:	April 30, 2024
Due date - all questions regarding this RFI:	May 10, 2024
Proposal submission opens:	May 13, 2024
Anticipated notification to bidders begins:	June 2024

**Questions**

All questions or requests for additional information regarding this RFI must be made in writing to [RFP@partner4work.org](mailto:RFP@partner4work.org) by May 10, 2024 at 11:59pm ET. Emails must have the subject line “Questions, Direct Care Worker [Organization name].” Answers will be posted publicly at [www.partner4work.org](http://www.partner4work.org). Interested parties are encouraged to check the website frequently for updates. Partner4Work may not answer questions received after May 10, 2024 at 11:59pm ET.

**Disclaimers**

- [Executive Order 2021-06, Worker Protection and Investment](#) must be followed throughout this RFI.
- This Request for Interest (RFI) does not commit Partner4Work to award a contract.
- Partner4Work may select a firm based on its initial proposal received, without discussion of the proposal. Accordingly, each proposal should be submitted on the most favorable terms, from a price and technical standpoint, that the bidder can submit to Partner4Work. Partner4Work may, however, have discussions with those firms it deems in its discretion to fall within a competitive range.
- Partner4Work reserves the right to request additional information from any applicant, request oral presentations from applicants, or conduct site visits from any applicant before a contract award.
- Partner4Work reserves the right to fund portions of a proposal, or to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part. Rejection of a portion of a proposal does not necessarily negate the entire proposal.
- Partner4Work may, at its discretion, adjust the level of funding provided to successful bidders under this RFI and/or consider the funding of proposals not initially funded under this RFI at a later date.
- No costs will be paid to cover the expense of preparing a proposal or procuring a contract for services or supplies.
- All data, material, and documentation originated and prepared by the bidder pursuant to the contract shall belong exclusively to Partner4Work and be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, Right to Know Law, or other applicable legislation.
- The contract award will not be final until Partner4Work and the successful bidder have executed a mutually satisfactory contractual agreement. Partner4Work reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the proposal submitted. No activity may begin prior to final Partner4Work approval of the award and execution of a contractual agreement between the successful bidder and Partner4Work.

- The submission of the proposal warrants that the costs quoted for services in response to the RFI are not in excess of those that would be charged to any other individual for the same services performed by the bidder.
- Applicants are advised that most documents in the possession of Partner4Work are considered public records and subject to disclosure. Partner4Work reserves the right to issue additional RFIs if and when it is in Partner4Work's best interest to do so and may elect to negotiate and issue multi-year contracts to successful bidders under this or subsequent RFIs.
- All programs and activities are designated as equal opportunity employers/programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Contact staff to request assistance with access to this RFI.
- Applicants must be capable of agreeing to the requirements set forth in the Partner4Work contract templates, available at <https://www.partner4work.org/document/partner4work-contract-templates/>.

## SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Additional information regarding Partner4Work is provided below. Because a key component of this project will be collaboration, respondents should have a basic familiarity with the workforce development system that Partner4Work and PA CareerLink® operate within, including the requirements of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

### **About Partner4Work**

TRWIB, Inc. (dba "Partner4Work") is the workforce development organization that connects funding, expertise, and opportunities to develop a thriving workforce in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Partner4Work delivers a comprehensive portfolio of programs and initiatives for adults and youth to ensure that current and future needs of employers, job seekers, and underemployed workers are met.

#### Helping businesses find and prepare the talent they need to thrive

As a non-profit organization, Partner4Work offers a wide variety of no-cost services to help regional employers attract the talent they need to thrive. From customized labor market data to assistance with finding diverse talent, Partner4Work is the resource to deliver customized employment solutions for any business.

#### Breaking down barriers to career opportunities

Partner4Work helps provide adult and young adult job seekers with the opportunities to find meaningful employment. Through our providers, we provide access to career training and exploration programs; employment assistance; job search help; and a robust summer jobs program. Partner4Work opens the door to career opportunities.

#### Providing community organizations with resources to make an impact

Partner4Work proudly partners with more than 80 organizations in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to provide opportunities for job seekers and businesses alike. We partner with community-based organizations, economic development agencies, training providers, businesses and educators to collectively bridge the gap between people looking for work and employers in need of talent.

As the Workforce Development Board (WDB) for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Partner4Work has programmatic and administrative responsibility for services of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provided in the workforce development areas of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Partner4Work also oversees employment and training programs for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Allegheny County.

To find out more about Partner4Work: [www.partner4work.org](http://www.partner4work.org)

### **PA CareerLink® Comprehensive Centers**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the primary federal law governing the funding and provision of workforce development services to job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access resources to succeed in the labor market, and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete

in the global economy. One of the cornerstones of WIOA is the one-stop service delivery system that meets the needs of job seekers and employers. One-stop centers, also known as American Job Centers, include a collection of agencies responsible for providing seamless service delivery to job seekers and employers. In Pennsylvania, the one-stop system is branded and referred to as “PA CareerLink®.” Partner4Work assists in overseeing two comprehensive one-stop centers in the Pittsburgh area – PA CareerLink® Downtown Pittsburgh and PA CareerLink® Allegheny East – offering the full range of PA CareerLink® services. Together, these centers receive more than 10,000 visits per year and provide access to a broad array of career-related services and information in one place, creating a vital link in connecting job seekers and employers. PA CareerLink® also provides a basic level of assistance and services to customers virtually and in community-based settings, through partner agencies that provide access to host locations for staff of PA CareerLink®. Residents of Allegheny County may participate in services at either center, regardless of whether they live in or outside the City of Pittsburgh.

While PA CareerLink® offers a variety of services to help diverse job-seekers connect with employment opportunities, it also works to assist employers in hiring. It provides materials for guidance surrounding compensation and benefits, job market data, apprenticeships, compliance, and other policy needs, and helps connect employers with qualified candidates. Employers can also request free assistance from PA CareerLink® staff to receive individualized solutions as needed. For more information about how PA CareerLink® can benefit employers, visit:

<https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/Common/LandingPage/Employer>