



## **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)**

### **Afghanistan Workforce Development Program (AWDP)**

#### **Career Counseling Center Development**

**Issuance Date:** June 07, 2017

**Closing Date:** July 07, 2017

**Closing Time:** 04:30pm Local Kabul Time

**Subject:** Request for Applications (RFA) Number (C3-013-001/2017)

**Reference:** Issued Under Creative Associates International (CREATIVE) USAID Contract No. AWDP AID-306-C-12-00007

This Request for Applications outlines the information required by the applicant for the development and submission of an application for consideration. The potential applicants are expected to review, understand, and conform to specifications contained in this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant's own risk.

All reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the grant program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles or the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for-profit organizations), may be paid under the grant. Construction is not eligible for reimbursement under this award.

For non-US organizations, the Standard Provisions for Non-US Nongovernmental Recipients will apply. For US organizations, 2 CFR 200 and the Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Recipients will apply. (See Standard Provisions for U.S Nongovernmental Recipients in Attachment J)

For the purposes of this program, this RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter, Schedule A, and Attachments.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Creative/AWDP nor does it commit Creative/AWDP to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The application is submitted at the risk of the applicants. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicants' expense.

Creative/AWDP will organize a pre-application conference on **June 18th, 2017** to respond to specific questions of the applicants that they send via email or pose during the conference. Organizations are

required to confirm their attendance in the pre-application conference **no later than June 15th, 2017 10:30am by writing to [grants@crea-awdp.com](mailto:grants@crea-awdp.com)** . An invitation letter will be then sent to the interested organizations for participation in the pre-application conference. Questions raised during the pre-application conference will be made available to all participants via email and also posted on the AWDP website for interested firms and entities that were not able to participate in the pre-application conference. Applicants are encouraged to review the AWDP FAQs (Attachment H) before the pre-application conference. In submitting questions each applicant shall include his/her full name, name of the organization on behalf of which question (s) are submitted, and contact details.

Thank you for your interest in Creative/AWDP activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Haines', written over a horizontal line.

David Haines

Chief of Party

Afghanistan Workforce Development Program (AWDP)

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# I. SCHEDULE A

## I.1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The AWDP is a six-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Creative. The goal of the AWDP is to increase mid-career employment opportunities for Afghan men and women by improving the quality of market-driven technical training and increasing job placement and salaries in key economic sectors. Providing support for the expansion and strengthening of private/semi-public sector for mid-career workers in key economic sectors is a priority area for both the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and USAID. This program is designed to be implemented through grants and milestone based payment approach.

Mid-career skilled workers are in high demand in several expanding economic sectors. Developing the capacity of skilled Afghan workers, and placing them into private/semi-public jobs, will contribute to a reduction in (a) the high level of under - and unemployment among Afghan nationals; and (b) the current dependency on foreign workers to fill mid-career, skilled jobs in Afghanistan.

In addition to public Universities in Afghanistan, privately-owned tertiary education institution named Private Institutions Higher Education and Universities (PIHEs) play a critical and important role in training the future workforce of Afghanistan. In 2015, AWDP initiated a series of consultative meetings with the executive leadership of more than 50 Kabul-based PIHEs whose input was critical to determine how best to further develop these services. Chancellors expressed the need for training on work environment and culture (organizational behavior, personality and soft skills, public speaking and email communication), and asked AWDP to focus on these areas specifically for career counseling and ERS support. The consultations identified an urgent need for PIHEs to access tools to collect relevant data as well as processes and infrastructure to assist graduates as they seek post-graduation employment. Afghanistan PIHE Union confirms that private higher education resources, consisting of 125 institutes, 400 cadre, and around 5,000 administration managers across Afghanistan, are ready to take part in meeting private sector demand for specific skills<sup>1</sup>.

AWDP believes PIHEs are suitable candidates to institutionalize the tested and successful training and job placement four-pillar model. Since 2012, the four-pillar AWDP model has yielded great results and outcomes, placing more than 27,000 Afghan men and women in private sector jobs. As the program progresses in its sixth year, the continued success and sustainability is of outmost importance. PIHEs will be recipients of demand assessment tools, labor market actors (private sector entities), best practices, resources and a large pool of specifically trained and placed Afghans.

## I.2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Train over 35,000 and place 25,000 people in jobs or award a salary increase of at least 3% to existing employees of Afghan producers/exporters and manufacturers. At least 25% of participants are to be women.
- Improve business education teaching and training skills.
- Improve technical and vocational education and training (TVET) providers capacity
- Link training providers with employers to understand private/semi-public sector skills needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Per PIHEs Union presentation in a USAID-funded AWDP sponsored program in November 2015.

AWDP was awarded a Two-year Cost extension extending the program to June 2018. In the addition to the use of four-step/pillar process to determine what skilled labor is needed and how to create it, the program is expected to train and certify master trainers and establish career counseling centers.

The current activities supported by the program are:

- Labor market demand assessment: Economic sector assessments determine what skills the private sector needs. The focus is on the mid-career/semi-professional level.
- Curriculum development or adaptation: Curricula is designed or adapted with Afghan training providers to meet skills for a proven labor market demand from private sector employers.
- Competency-based training: Grants are provided to help local organizations deliver training in specific areas demanded by business.
- Employment placement services: Pre-employment training, job-placement services, and follow-up services are provided to trainees to help them find jobs.
- AWDP Four-Pillar Model Sustainability and Master Training of Trainers (MToT): Provide training in adult learning methodology and instructional design to Private Institutes of Higher Education instructors (PIHES), selected to receive support to commercialize the AWDP skills training and job placement/promotion model. Instructors who successfully complete the training will receive salary increases and count towards the program's target.
- Career Counseling Center (C3): Career Counseling is a critical demand for Afghan youths seeking employment and/or determining a suitable career path. While some PIHES have recently established C3 facilities, the leadership of these institutions has indicated a high demand for career and employment-related services, technical support, tools, and resources to effectively respond to labor market needs, and the needs of the graduating students. Job seekers, who utilize PIHE C3 facilities receiving technical support from AWDP, will be counted towards the program's targets.

### **1.3. SCOPE OF WORK:**

The purpose of this RFA is to develop Career Counseling Centers (C3) within the tertiary system to meet the labor market demands in Afghanistan. Private Universities and Private Institutes of Higher Education (PIHES) are eligible to apply for this RFA.

Applicants are highly encouraged to explore demand for specific services, skills and/or software applications, which promote the personal, social, and academic success of Afghan students and prepare them to join the labor market.

Career services listed below are for general/reference purposes, applicants are encouraged to develop a specific list of skills as demanded by students and employers:

- Individual Career Counseling —is the one-to-one relationship with a career counselor.
- Career Fair—often held in the Fall semester as a way to introduce students to employers and potential careers.

- Job Fair—the more focused "yes we are hiring" job fair can take place in the Fall or Spring semesters. Some smaller colleges combine to form consortium job fairs, which draw a greater number of employers than any one college could get on their own.
- Career Assessments—personality, interests, skills, aptitudes, values and more can be measured through standardized assessments in combination with career counseling.
- Career Seminars or Group Counseling—specific programs may be offered on career planning, career exploration, and other job search topics. Websites are often used as the reference guides for many of the job search seminars being provided, so you already have a head start. Yet you can always learn more.

### **Resources for C3**

The following are some recommended resources which may be offered at a Career Counseling Center. These are examples and best-practice recommendations, applicants must recommend resources they believe will support graduating student and alumni find employment opportunities:

- Books—on specific careers and industries, as well as a variety of job search books.
- Subscriptions—magazines specific to supporting the needs of college grad careers and job search.
- Occupational Listings—information about a variety of different occupations, including economic outlook and forecast for future demand and growth.
- Directories—listings of employers who hire at the entry level, often categorized by job type, industry, and geography.
- Graduate School Information—information on various graduate schools, including college admissions catalogs, degree requirements, and associate application forms, plus additional information on any necessary entrance exams and/or testing.
- Employer Information—information on employers who are coming to campus in the coming semester, who have come in the past, and who have an interest in students from your school but are not coming to your campus. This information may be in the form of employer folders (where information provided by current year and previous years' on-campus employers is stored, if any and if applicable), hard-copy research, or CD research tools, or online access to related Internet sites.
- Job Postings—specific jobs may be posted in the office, either in advance of on-campus interviews or for employers who are unable to come to campus. They are called job postings because in the past they were typically posted on an actual bulletin board—the "job board." While the job postings may still be posted on a bulletin board, many schools also have the job postings in electronic or Web format. The job postings are typically updated on a continuous basis, so be sure to check back often. Or set up job agents for electronic notification of new positions being posted.
- Computer Resources—often there will be PC-based programs, as well as Internet access.

Under this RFA, applicants are required to assess demand for and applicability of social and professional networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo Groups, WhatsApp Groups, and YouTube which support employment of Afghan students. Both the skills and/or software applications and social and professional

networking groups are the requirements that must be considered while developing the technical application for AWDP C3 grant opportunities. During the demand assessment process, applicants must be specific with regards to skills they identify. Employers will employ the recent graduates, who exhibit interest and skills that are aligned to their demand. Applicants must detail how the various platforms will be utilized to maximize reach and increase access to the Afghan labor market.

### AWDP C3 Model Description

Maintaining the momentum of AWDP’s successful Four Pillar (see diagram) demand-driven training and job placement/promotion model, C3 will ideally serve to further increase private sector employment opportunities for Afghans who graduate from PIHEs and actively seek employment opportunities, and ultimately, contribute to a more secure economic enabling environment for Afghanistan’s most promising, local enterprises. C3 should provide comprehensive support services that promote the personal, social, and academic success of students and prepare them to join the labor market. C3s should help students to explore a range of subjects and gain greater self-awareness of their career goals. C3s should offer a

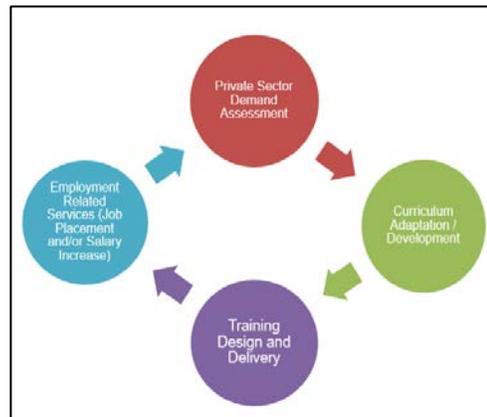


Figure 1. AWDP Four Pillar Model

positive environment for students and graduates to investigate different career paths and jobs, and find the appropriate training to develop the necessary skills for the workforce. The below C3 model empowers students to define, prepare for and manage their careers. The key elements of this model, based on global best practices, are defined below:



**Figure 2. Career Counseling Center (C3) Model**

### **C3 Model Stages**

The above C3 model takes a holistic approach to career and job search counseling and education, encouraging students to investigate opportunities with consideration to their skills, goals, and values. In its employer relations role, the centers should also provide a valuable link in the PIHEs-employer network. The centers help employers make the right connections and build relationships to meet their hiring goals and other developmental needs. Each student or graduate progress through the 5 critical stages of career development: self-assessment, career exploration, skills development, target jobs, and career management.

The five-step C3 process should be facilitated by trained career counselors and include trainings delivered either remotely, or in person by appropriately trained master trainers. Where applicable, the Applicant should include cost savings activities group counseling services should also be split into group sessions to cover generic and more standardized subjects and individual sessions to address specific needs and issues. After successful implementation of the C3, the final step for the grantees is to place 50% of graduated job seekers who received career counseling services.

### **A. SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROCESS**

**Program Description:** Self-assessment tools are proven to engage students to gather information about themselves to make informed career decisions. The assessments will identify career interests, values, personality, and measure a student's aptitude.

**Technical Application Requirement:** Applicants should explain in detail and elaborate on the types of assessments they will use, tools they will apply and how they will establish a process to identify students' career interests, values, personality, and measure a student's aptitude defined as:

- **Values:** the things that are important to the individual, like achievement, status and autonomy.
- **Interests:** what the individual enjoys doing, i.e. community engagement, personal development, leadership or teamwork in sports or the arts etc.
- **Personality:** a person's individual traits, motivational drives, needs and attitudes
- **Aptitudes:** the activities the individual is good at, such as writing, computer programming and teaching. An aptitude may be a natural skill or one acquired.

The Applicants should utilize existing high quality career assessment tools and support adapting these high-quality career assessment tools specific to their institution and the Afghan demographic.

As a first step in increasing a student's competitive advantage, the Applicants would ideally utilize the results of the self-assessment to co-develop a career exploration plan with the student. The Applicants must provide students' eligibility to use these tools to facilitate on-going career decision-making afterwards.

## **B. CAREER EXPLORATION**

**Program Description:** In today's highly competitive and globally mobile workforce, and a rapidly changing technology-based economy, career exploration is becoming increasingly important to public universities, PIHEs, private organizations and government agencies. Career exploration is a continual process that requires gathering information about the individual student strengths and relate to potential careers.

**Program Description:** Applicants are required to explain in detail how a career counselor will advise students through individual and group counseling sessions to investigate:

- Career options
- Employment trends
- Evolving and expanding industries in Afghanistan and the region. Regular labor market information will be shared with graduating students on the most employable sectors and what skills are highest in demand
- Work environments
- Additional requirements/certifications to get ahead
- Gender considerations, particularly, for women graduates including but not limited to security, transportation facilities and other important issues that are of concern to women and their families

## **C. INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING SESSIONS**

**Program Description:** Individual counseling sessions, are generally considered one-on-one sessions between a career counselor and a student to address specific career needs of a student. The individual counseling sessions should offer support as the student progresses through the five-step process described above.

**Technical Application Requirement:** Applicants should describe in detail the intake process to guide the student through the self-assessment process. Subsequent mini sessions may be required to address any concerns and multiple attempts at the self-assessment may be required. Individual Counseling can offer you a space to gain insight into your struggles, better understand yourself, career interest and different career options. Career exploration can be also facilitated via group counseling session(s).

In this case, given the available timeline, Applicants should focus primarily on final year undergraduates. However, in the post-AWDP C3 model PIHEs sustainability model should include engaging students as early as possible during their university career. Applicants are required to explain in details and elaborate on how they will continue to engage students post-grant.

#### **D. GROUP COUNSELING SESSIONS**

**Program Description:** Group counseling establishes an environment and an interactive platform where students can share and learn from each other's experiences to understand the career exploration process better. Group sessions provides a positive environment to reflect and share frustrations, commiserate with their future colleagues, and possibly develop solutions to those concerns. The goal of the sessions would be to expand a student's career choice other than those suggested by family and friends based on the current Afghan context. In the short term, group counseling will be offered to all registered participants and in the long term engage alumni. Overall, the experience aims to expand student's perspectives, strengthen their decision-making skills, and motivate them to make changes in individual career approaches.

**Technical Application Requirements:** Applicants must detail the format and design of Group Counseling Services with a clear and coherent description of how it will help students explore their career options. Applicants must describe how the sessions would identify common employment barriers, contemporary issues related to employment and careers specific to the Afghan context. The Applicants must detail the steps of the process they envision for this phase and how will the activities and inputs lead to the desired outcome.

#### **E. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING**

**Program Description:** The skills development stage includes a range of trainings and activities to increase a student's employability in the chosen industry. These skills include both technical and Employment Related Services (ERS).

Technical training is the process of teaching graduating students how to more accurately and thoroughly perform the technical components of their jobs. Training can include technology applications, products, sales, research, customer services, and more. Technical skills are job-specific as opposed to soft skills, which are transferable. After the grant is awarded, the AWDP will work with the grantee/PIHE to ensure all data and information available on PSE demand for technical as well as ERS skills is made available to grantee.

Like the AWDP Four-Pillar demand assessment model, skills development training design is to be short-term, participatory and competency-based to develop the specific skills required by Afghan labor market. This approach ensures that upon completion of the trainings, each trainee has developed the competencies, which are in alignment with the demand assessment report of the Afghan labor market. After the C3 grant is awarded, grantees are required to develop a training design for each training session which includes the critical elements of training design and obtain AWDP approval prior to commencement of the training delivery.

AWDP's technical training duration is of minimum 40 contact hours, ERS training for job seekers is of minimum 10 contact hours, counseling sessions for job seekers is of 5 contact hours (Total of 55 contact hours of technical, ERS training and counseling sessions for job seekers)

**Technical Application Requirements:** The demand for designing technical training programs will be from PSEs and/or students. Applicants must outline the elements of the pre-employment skills development training that needs to be provided to students and job seekers that will enable them to find a job.

Applicants are required to elaborate how they will design and deliver a short-term, participatory, and competency-based skills development-training program. Applicants must list and explain in details the key elements of a participatory and competency-based training design that they used in the past and found useful. AWDP encourages innovation. Applicants are welcome to come up with any time-tested and effective methods for participatory and competency-based training design and delivery.

- **Pre-Employment Training:** Applicants must outline the elements of the pre-employment training that needs to be provided to students who register to use the services of the C3 and which will enable them to find a job in the Afghan labor market. Applicants are required to share samples of tools and processes they will utilize to determine the type of ERS training the students will need. Applicants must outline the core elements of a pre-employment training they believe are critical to be considered for job seekers and employees. Applicants are required to generate separate lists of pre-employment skills for job seekers, current Afghan producers/exporters, and manufacturers' employees.

Applicants must include a specific list of skills that will focus on employment-retaining skills. Once in a job, everyone must possess the life/soft-skills that will help him or her keep that job should be outlined.

## **F. TARGET JOBS**

**Program Description:** The training experiences allow students to add valuable skills to their career exploration plan and begin to explore the reality of possible future employment opportunities in the specific industry. At this stage, the center encourages and helps jobseeker(s) to attend career/job fairs. The center will continue helping individuals by working to identify creative approaches that would show students how to stand out from other applicants.

**Technical Application Requirements:**

*Job Development and Databases:* Applicants should describe how they will identify job opportunities, conduct job analysis and design job seekers' profile forms that will help the employers see the relevant skills and experience of the trained university graduates. Applicants should explain how they will develop the employment database, and include a copy of the design in the technical application, containing information about job opportunities with the Afghan employers for entry-career job seekers and job seekers profile. Applicants must realize the job development activities should start at the very beginning of the program when initial contacts with Afghan employers are made. Establishing social and professional networking groups like Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo, YouTube, WhatsApp Groups, LinkedIn, etc. play an important and complementary role in ensuring graduating students find jobs. Applicants should explain their methodology of how they will establish social and professional networks, which links employers, PIHEs and university graduates with each other. Applicants also must describe how these networks will function, and how the members will use and benefit from these networks in finding a job. In addition, it is important that applicants should work with two other parties, employers and job seekers, in order to make them able to use these networks in finding jobs and/or advancing their career.

*Job matching and Job Placement Services:* Applicants must describe the process of job matching and job placement services that will be provided to their students. Applicants should describe the job matching services it plans to provide including a comprehensive description of how they will engage with the Afghan employers to identify job vacancies for entry-career university graduates. Applicants must describe how they will match and refer students/graduates to job vacancies based on their skills and abilities and the demand of Afghan employers.

*Job Fairs:* Job fairs in Afghanistan have been recognized useful in bridging the gap between job seekers and employers. An innovative approach facilitates a low cost highly effective job placement platform. Applicants are required to include at least one mega job fair and three career fair and provide details on design of the fair(s).

## **G. MANAGE CAREER**

**Program Description:** The center will continue supporting students/alumni with counseling to help properly manage their career and to utilize opportunity for advancement in the future. C3 will also continue to provide alumni with latest updates on opportunities, news and most recent trends in labor market.

**Technical Application Requirement:** Applicants should include an outreach plan to continue supporting students/alumni with counseling to help properly manage their career and to utilize opportunity for advancement in the future. Applicants are required to explain their follow up services methodology/strategy for graduates and job seekers who have been placed. This strategy should elaborate a mechanism through which the grantees and AWDP can verify each placement. The mechanism also needs to ensure that the placed job seekers maintain their employment for at least three months and will receive on-the-job support as required. In the follow up, applicants should ensure that established social network groups are active and exchanging information, documents and other necessary announcement with each other. To this end, applicants should clearly elaborate their methodology for developing and usage of social network by three parties – employers, PIHEs and graduating students.

## **H. MAINSTREAMING TECHNOLOGY IN C3 SERVICES**

**Program Description:** Training, knowledge, and supervision regarding career counseling and technology is paramount to delivering services that is considered a “best practice.” Computer-Assisted Career Guidance Systems (CACG system) is a term used to describe technology application that combines career assessment, career information, and career guidance into one integrated system.

**Technical Application Requirement:** The Applicant must agree to integrate the blended learning activities that are being hosted by AWDP Performance Management Information System (PMIS). The PMIS, in addition to effective monitoring and evaluation of training delivery quality and job placements/promotions benchmarks functions, also provides an interactive, online platform allowing registered C3 users to access a number mandatory courses. The applicant must list what aspect of technology it will integrate in C3 and describe how it will help the graduate students find jobs.

## **I. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS:**

**Program Description:** Persistent existence of *de facto* gender bias in Afghanistan has been, and continues to hinder female participation in all walks of life, depriving them of opportunities, access, and leadership. It exists at all levels and in every organization. Female participants of various programs in Afghanistan have continuously complained of having a low priority for access and participation. AWDP has been hailed for its groundbreaking innovation to address this challenge.

**Technical Application Requirements:** Applicants should present a detailed plan on how they prioritizing female participants in their C3 activities, and ensuring that at least 25% of students that complete C3 activities are female. In addition to female prioritization and exploring the concept of female-only groups, C3, like AWDP more generally is guided by the principle of economic empowerment. By empowering women in Afghanistan to gain skills, get jobs, start businesses and economically contribute to the household income, this automatically changes their status within the family, and affects their economic status and value. AWDP seeks to ensure that women in Afghanistan have the same opportunities as men, academically and economically, and that they have the opportunity at every stage to fulfill their potential.

## **I.4. SUSTAINABILITY:**

Applicants are required to describe the measures they will take to ensure sustainability after the end of the grant agreement e.g. capacity building, institutionalization etc. The applicant must state which strategy they will use in order to make C3 self-sustained. In addition, the applicant should describe which strategy they will use to make the career counseling center attractive and appealing to students or clients. The applicant should also state their plan for continuing C3 after end of grants and specify the resources they will need and how they will obtain those resources.

## **I.5. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

Networking and public outreach and communications is very important for AWDP. Applicants are required to summarize their plans for undertaking any public outreach and communications campaigns/activates for four pillars of AWDP, where applicable. AWDP requires information including but not limited to planned number of billboards with location of services, website announcements with

details, number of job fairs, job postings, or any other events as part of the public and university outreach and communications campaign/activities. Applicants must note that Creative/AWDP will not fund any TV/Radio advertisement.

## **1.6. AWDP PLACEMENT AND VERIFICATION PROCEDURES:**

To ensure the USAID funds are utilized efficiently and effectively for the purpose it is awarded, the AWDP integrates Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) into the output level for program indicators. These indicators specifically focus on the accuracy and validity of the data reported through analysis of the data collection procedures and the data maintenance systems in place at the project level. AWDP will verify each reported placement through phone as well as face-to-face interviews. The grantee is responsible to facilitate AWDP's frequent visits to the employers to meet the placed job seekers. In addition, the grantee is responsible to secure AWDP access to the placed job seekers HR documents (like employee's contract, amended contract or payroll, if required). It is important that applicants include this requirement in the MoUs they will sign with the Afghan employers so all involved parties are aware and therefore agree with this requirement.

## **1.7. USAID – THIRD PARTY MONITORING REQUIREMENT:**

As part of its Accountable Assistance for Afghanistan (A3) initiative, USAID has developed a multi-tiered monitoring approach that focuses on gathering and analyzing multiple sources of data across these tiers in order to compare information and ensure confidence in reporting data, allowing USAID to use the results to make further programmatic decisions. Multi-tiered monitoring collects and analyzes all data and activities from NGO statement, local news articles, questionnaires, surveys, polls, and even letters or texts from Afghan citizen.

The USAID multi-tiered monitoring approach is broken into five time-tested tiers:

- **Tier 1.** Hands-on monitoring by USAID or U.S Government officials.
- **Tier 2.** Monitoring of implementing partners' quarterly reports, timeline, and site visit reports.
- **Tier 3.** USAID tracks projects through feedback from the USAID network of partnerships with the Government of Afghanistan and international donors also working in the same sector or region.
- **Tier 4.** USAID reaches out to Afghanistan's growing local civil society organization, such as special interest or public action groups, who often are citizens personally interested in a project's progress. The actual project's progress. The actual projects beneficiaries are a valuable source of information as well.
- **Tier 5** monitoring is an essential part of USAID's multi-layered approach that uses independently hired monitoring firms to verify and evaluate projects activities. Tier 5 monitoring requires your full and proactive participant, input, and assistance. The independent monitoring firm must be kept up-to-date on every training session the AWDP grantees organize in Kabul and the provinces. Creative/AWDP and Grantees are required to fully comply with and be responsive to this important requirement.

## **1.8. DELIVERABLES:**

At the time of award of the grant to the successful applicants, the deliverables below will be mutually agreed upon and included in the grant agreement between AWDP and the successful applicants. The deliverables below will be in the form of Chart of Milestone. AWDP will pay the grantee after completion and verification of these deliverables. In the Chart of Milestone, the deliverables will be organized in up to six milestones. Each milestone will have a planned completion date. It is an AWDP requirement that all the deliverables should be in English language. Deliverables are as follows:

1. Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) between AWDP's grantees and Afghan employers
2. Demand assessments report
3. Trainees' registration in AWDP – ERS database - filled online.
4. Key personnel's biodata – C3 Manager and Career Services Counselor (using the AWDP biodata sheet)
5. AWDP Approved career services design, training design, and curriculum for each training
6. AWDP Training standardized M&E Registration Forms, Training Attendance Sheets, M&E Exit Questionnaires and updated M&E database.
7. On-time written summary of meetings with Afghan employers
8. On-time weekly reports including details about the program implementation
9. Event calendar should be uploaded to AWDP's performance management information system (PMIS). Success stories should be sent (soft copy) by email to the AWDP
10. Photographs of the training should be sent (in electronic copy) by email to the AWDP
11. Placement verification forms
12. AWDP Placement standardized follow up report upload in PMIS and send an electronic copy to AWDP for confirming milestone completion.
13. Final report providing a detailed summary of the activities, successes stories and lessons learned should be submitted to AWDP Public outreach and communication department
14. Campus and public outreach and communication products (banners copy, posters copy, TV announcement clips, radio announcement etc.)
15. Submission of public outreach and communication plan, which must include (banners copy, posters copy, TV announcement clips, radio announcement etc.)

## **1.9. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE:**

This RFA covers the cities of Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Bamyán. Applicants must specify the target numbers of trainees in each training location. Applicants must have targets for any city that they choose to apply for.

## **1.10. APPLICANTS QUALIFICATION:**

The AWDP intended to ensure that the applicants who applied for grants, passed the initial review stage, and considered for the next review stage, have technically and financially adequate capability and capacity to implement the awarded grants in aligned with the set criteria. The initial requirements are detailed in below points:

### **1.1.1. ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE:**

A profile of the organizations applying for this grant opportunity must be submitted along with the technical application. Applicants must demonstrate their interest and institutional commitment and preparedness to provide career counseling services.

#### **A. The institutional profile must include the following information:**

2. Registration, accreditation and/or certification of the institution;
3. Date entity established;
4. Description of physical facilities and equipment;
5. Number and type of staff, their qualifications and organization structure;
6. Valid Registration Certificate from Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE).
7. No suspension record emanating from not complying with rules and regulation with MoHE.
8. Experience: PIHEs with minimum 6 years of experience.
9. Faculty: PIHEs must have at least 3 faculties currently teaching.
10. Annual graduation should be at least 400 students per year
11. Degree: PIHEs must provide a minimum of a bachelor level degree program. Universities that offer master degree programs are preferred.
12. PIHEs are not required to offer existing C3 services; both PIHEs that do or do not offer C3 are equally encouraged to apply.
13. PIHEs must be committed to offering C3 and have an expectation of sustaining the service, post implementation of AWDP.
14. Partnerships and interaction with PSEs are crucial to success. PIHEs must be able to demonstrate successful partnerships with the commercial sector.
15. Financial and administrative systems capable of providing appropriate reporting of utilization of grant funds.
16. Existing Alumni network

#### **B. Staff Qualifications Requirements:**

A key requirement for the implementing organization is that their career counseling staff possess at least a bachelor's level degree and have expertise in the following technical areas:

1. Career Center Manager must have experience managing staff and budgets, data collection experience and developing policies and procedures;
2. Career Center Manager must have 75% obligated to supporting the management of center.
3. All staff must have experience establishing and maintaining effective and cooperative working relationships with students, alumni, faculty, employers, and the public.
4. Initiates contact with employers.
5. Competency-based curriculum development;

6. Competency-based training design;
7. Participatory and competency-based training delivery;
8. Training evaluation and reporting;
9. Excellent command of Pashto or Dari language;
10. At least three years' experience;
11. Having at least a relevant bachelor degree from a recognized university by the start of employment.

The awarded applicants must provide AWDP with the key personnel biodata for review, including reference check and approval.

## **2. AWARD INFORMATION**

Subject to the availability of funds, Creative/AWDP expects to award up to 5-7 Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs) grantees drawn from a pool of PIHEs Applicants in Afghanistan up to US\$75,000.00 to \$ 100,000. The total amount available is US\$ 600,000.00 for this sector. The expected duration of Creative/AWDP support or the period of performance is 9 months from the day of the award. Creative/AWDP reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

## **3. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

- Be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status. In lieu of official registration, a grantee may show proof of effort to secure registration, exemption from registration, or show cause why such registration is either not optional or practicable
- Meet the projects objectives and principles
- Contain expected outcomes and results consistent with and linked to the projects objectives
- Applicant is not a debarred organization

### **Types of Grantees Eligible:**

- Applicants should be legally registered and recognized under the laws of Afghanistan and operating in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations. In lieu of official registration, grantees may show proof of effort to secure registration, exemption from registration, or show cause why such registration is optional or not practicable. Applicants must show valid registration with the appropriate GoIRA entity.
- Afghan Private Institute of Higher Education

## 4. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing not later than 5 days prior to the closing date shown above to [grants@crea-awdp.com](mailto:grants@crea-awdp.com). Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures, which accompany their application.

The application must be received at the Creative/AWDP's Office at the location indicated below no later than 30 days after the date of issuance indicated at the top of this cover letter at the place designated below for receipt of applications. Pre-award costs are not allowable and will not be reimbursed. An application and modifications thereof shall be submitted to [grants@crea-awdp.com](mailto:grants@crea-awdp.com) in electronic format and/or hard copy to the following address:

**Creative Associates International**  
Afghanistan Workforce Development Program (AWDP)  
House No. 1499, Street No 2, Shashdarak  
Kabul Afghanistan  
Cell: +93 (0) 796190088

Application package can be submitted in both hard copy and/or electronic form. The application package must be developed in light of the guidelines that are included in Creative/AWDP's RFA package; attachments A to I as listed below:

- **Attachment A:** Request for Application (RFA)
- **Attachment B:** (Technical Application Template). Applicants should follow the instructions in this attachment to prepare their technical application.
- **Attachment C1:** (Financial Application Template). Applicants should submit project budget using this template.
- **Attachment C2:** (AWDP FAA Budget Guidelines). Applicants should develop project budget and budget narrative as per the instructions in this attachment. Budget Narratives template is included in this attachment too.
- **Attachment D** (M&E Guideline). Applicants are not required to submit any M&E Plan at this stage.
- **Attachment E** (Work Plan Template): Applicants should complete the work plan template and submit along with technical and financial applications.
- **Attachment F** - Private-Semi-Public Sector Entities Demand Assessment Report
- **Attachment G** (Biodata sheet): Applicants must fill a biodata sheet for proposed C3 Manager, Career Counselor and M&E Officer and send to AWDP for checking and approval
- **Attachment H** (AWDP FAQs): Applicants should read all the questions and given answers, it will help them to solve some of their confusion and if still they have questions must ask during the pre-application conference.
- **Attachment I** (Certifications)): Please see the attachment or download it from the following address: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303.pdf> and Required Certification as per ADS 303.3.8 Address: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/308.pdf>

A complete application package is required to include the attachments listed below in the required format from A to G:

- **Attachment A:** Technical Application (MS Office Format)
- **Attachment B1:** Project Budget
- **Attachment B2:** Budget Narratives (MS Office Format)
- **Attachment C:** Work Plan (MS Office Format)
- **Attachment D:** 3 Signed and Stamped MoUs
- **Attachment E:** Final report of any demand-driven training project with client's stamp, if any.
- **Attachment F:** Biodata sheets of proposed C3 Manager, Career Counselor and M&E Officer
- **Attachment G:** DUNS Number, (if available)

#### **Restrictions:**

- Grant Funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to finance any of the following commodities as per ADS 312 Eligibility of Commodities:
  - ✓ **Ineligible Commodities:** Military equipment, surveillance equipment, commodities or equipment for the support of police or other law enforcement activities, abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, gambling equipment, weather modification equipment.
  - ✓ **Restricted commodities include:** Agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, contraceptives and condoms, pesticides, used equipment, fertilizer.
  - ✓ **Others:** Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source and nationality and other regulations found under ADS 310 or from countries and suppliers as may be identified by USAID's consolidated list of debarred, suspended or ineligible subcontractors at <http://www.epls.gov/>.
- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant, including any grantee headquarters expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.
- Previous obligations and/or bad debts.
- Fines and /or penalties.
- Other costs unallowable under USAID and/or federal regulations such as referenced 2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles and FAR 31.2 Cost Principles for Commercial Organizations.

#### **Late Application**

Late applications are marked as "late" and are ineligible for review or award; however, Creative reserves the right to accept and include late applications in the review and award process when it is considered within the best interest of Creative to do so and if applications that were received on time have not been opened and reviewed. Applications that are submitted late or incomplete runs the risk of not being considered for review.

## **5. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

Right after the deadline for submitting applications, a Technical Selection Committee (TEC) will convene. Throughout the evaluation process, AWDP shall take steps to ensure that members of the TEC do not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such with regard to the organizations whose applicants are under review. An individual shall be considered to have the appearance of a

conflict of interest if that person, or that person's spouse, partner, child, close friend or relative works for or is negotiating to work for, or has a financial interest (including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors) in any organization that submitted an application currently under the panel's review. Members of the TEC shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from parties to the awards.

Verification of the application submission requirements will be conducted by the Grants Department of Creative/AWDP. If an application is deemed suitable, an award will be made within Fifteen (15) working days of the TEC meeting provided that the awardee furnishes Creative/AWDP with all the required documentation as itemized in this RFA, receives USAID Vetting Support Unit (VSU) Eligibility Notice and USAID Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) approval.

The application will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria set forth below. To the extent necessary (if an award is not made based on initial applications), negotiations may be conducted with each applicant whose application, after discussion and negotiation, has a reasonable chance of being selected for award.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

#### **2. Strategic Fit 20 points**

- ✓ Relevance to USAID workforce development strategy and priorities
- ✓ Relevance to program goals
- ✓ Sustainability of project results
- ✓ Anticipated impact on the beneficiaries
- ✓ Focuses on expanding access to quality skills development programs
- ✓ Produces measurable impacts on rates of beneficiary job placement

#### **3. Technical approach 20 points**

- ✓ Clearly defined problem statement
- ✓ Goals clearly defined
- ✓ Innovative technical approach
- ✓ Potential obstacles and solutions
- ✓ Includes a detailed, step-by-step outline of how the recipient will use grant funds to achieve Creative/AWDP objectives

#### **4. Organizational Capacity 20 points**

- ✓ Relevant staff skills to the proposed project
- ✓ Experience in geographical region
- ✓ Written accounting and procurement procedures
- ✓ Capacity to adhere to USAID financial guidelines

#### **5. Specific Training and Placement Experience 10 points**

- ✓ Experience in conducting demand-driven training? If yes, please attach the final report with client stamp (Attachment I)

- ✓ Does the entity have experience in employment related services such as job placement, internship, apprenticeship etc.? If yes, please mention the information in Technical Application (Attachment A) in Organizational Background Section.

**6. Gender Integration 10 points**

- ✓ Organizational mandate and mechanism to integrate gender equality in the program
- ✓ Gender analysis & planning integrated into program process
- ✓ Family friendly policies exist that enable both women and men to balance work and family life
- ✓ Written policies that commit to gender equality in staff employment & development

**7. Cost Effectiveness 20 points**

- ✓ Are costs reasonable, allowable, and allocable
- ✓ Is the application cost effective
- ✓ Does the application have the required percentage of cost share/leveraging
- ✓ Minimizes costs of managing the project and maximizes the number of beneficiaries trained and placed or granted salary increases.

## 6. AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

The recommendation or selection of an application in accordance with established procedures does not guarantee an award. All applicants must demonstrate that they possess, or have the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided.

A successful applicant can expect to receive an Award Letter, signed by the Chief of Party –David Haines. The award letter will be addressed to the organizations point of contact as stated in the application. Applicants that were not successful can expect a letter explaining the reason for their unsuccessful application.

Following the Award Letter, final negotiations will take place before the signing of a grant agreement.

### **Reporting Procedures:**

A description of reporting requirements will be included in the Grant Agreement. The types of reporting required, along with the schedule of reporting, will depend on the grant type and project duration. Reporting forms will be provided to grant recipients. Types of reporting will include the following:

- Program report to be submitted during project implementation according to a schedule described in the grant agreement. This report will include a description of progress made during the period, problems in project implementation; actions taken to overcome them; and activities planned for the next period.
- Final program report will describe how the project objectives and goals were reached, results of the project, and problems and solutions during implementation. This information should be presented in a manner suitable for presentation to the public.
- Financial reports will be submitted to AWDP according to a schedule described in the grant agreements. Types of financial reports, as well as the schedule of reporting, will depend on the type of grant, length of project, and amount of grant funding. In addition, the grant recipient is required to submit a detailed Final Financial Report.

Issuance of the final installment of grant funds is contingent upon Creative/AWDP receipt and acceptance of Final Financial and Final Program Reports.

**Creative/AWDP reserve the right to fund any or none of the applications received**