REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SPECIAL CALL FOR BUILDING THE DEFENSE INNOVATION-BASE'S ADVANCED MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE PROGRAM

Final Proposal with Final Budget, Due: April 12, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

A need to build and expand the nation's innovation-based manufacturing workforce capability and capacity has been clearly established through national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) workforce analyses, including the 2018 Deloitte Skills Gap and Future Workforce in Manufacturing Study, which was updated in 2021 in the report titled "Creating Pathways for Tomorrow's Workforce Today". While the US made progress in 2022 in filling open manufacturing jobs, 759,000 remain unfilled. This analysis estimates that the nation will see 2.1 million manufacturing positions go unfilled by 2030 at a cost of $1 trillion unless the U.S. steps up to this pivotal supply-side challenge.

This situation is partially because only 20% of graduating high school seniors are ready for the rigors of STEM occupations, leaving manufacturers and other advanced technology companies forgoing investment in advanced manufacturing tools and/or offshoring manufacturing jobs. The United States is expected to lose $1 trillion in economic output due to the skills gap in 2030 alone.

Focusing solely on education at the high school, vocational, and college/university levels to rebuild this critical workforce is not enough to sufficiently address the 2.1 million unfilled manufacturing positions, especially given that the number of students graduating high school is projected to shrink beginning in 2025. This is compounded by the number of graduating seniors that failed basic math competency – 40% – which is a 2% increase from 2015.

An additional level of complexity to addressing this skills gap is the speed at which technology evolves, quickly rendering technical skills obsolete. STEM workers focused on advanced technologies and manufacturing practices must be able to upskill quickly to keep pace with technological change.

PROJECT DURATION

There is **one objective** associated with this Special Call. The duration of this objective is 60 days. Proposers should use a notional start date of May 1, 2024, for budgeting purposes. Contracting is pursuant to 2 CFR 200 (Uniform Guidance).

SECTION 2: SPECIAL CALL OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Broad DEIA Engagement within Manufacturing

This effort seeks to engage a wide audience of manufacturing engineers and technologists (those leading or supporting technology research and development) with the topic of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in advanced manufacturing. It is anticipated that the performer will develop, plan, and execute sessions focused on, at a minimum, the role played by communities in solving local manufacturing challenges with region-specific solutions and 2) the importance of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in addressing workforce growth, as well as the importance of diversifying the pathways to workforce pipelines. These sessions should take place at a widely attended event or venue to maximize audience participation and exposure to these important concepts.

SECTION 3: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS

3.1 Deadline

Proposers should submit a Final Proposal and Cost Proposal (using the NextFlex Cost Proposal template) no later than April 12, 2024.

3.2 Proposal Format Guidelines

To accelerate contracting, it is anticipated that the Proposal will be incorporated as an attachment into the final agreement. It is imperative that proposals define tasks and deliverables that are tangible, measurable, and demonstrable. The specifications of each task and deliverable must be clearly defined. The project should detail tasks, deliverables, and the project schedule, and should include quarterly and final reports, and the Cost Proposal should be created using the provided template. Ensure all instructional design service costs, travel, and other direct costs are included in the Cost Proposal.

Submission: The proposer shall submit one (1) electronic copy of its Detailed Research Plan (DRP) with a complete cost proposal to proposal@nextflex.us.

SECTION 4: ADMINISTRATIVE TOPICS

4.1 Confidential Information

Proposals are not considered confidential and will be provided to the OSD ManTech EWD team for review. If confidential/proprietary information needs to be included, the proposer shall contact NextFlex before the Project Abstract due date.

NextFlex will only share proposal content with OSD ManTech and will not share proposal content with other proposing institutes or any other outside organizations or individuals.

Additionally, proposers should refrain from including export-controlled information in their submissions. If a proposer believes that inclusion of export-controlled information is required to fully convey the merits of its proposal, the proposer should contact NextFlex by email to proposal@nextflex.us to discuss this issue no later than April 9, 2024.

4.2 Financial Requirements

Subaward agreements generally will be awarded as cost reimbursement, not-to-exceed subawards subject to Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200). If the proposer's organization has a U.S. government-

approved rate structure, please use it. All subrecipients of the Special Call subawards are expected to have a government approved or industry standard accounting system by which actual project costs are tracked and reported. Must have a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) number.

4.3 Eligibility Requirements

Organizations familiar with OSD ManTech's education and workforce development strategy preferred.

4.4 Funding Amount

Granting of subawards to proposals submitted in response to this Special Call is contingent upon the continued availability of U.S. government funding. Available funding up to $25,000.00

SECTION 5: PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Once a subawardee has been selected by OSD ManTech, NextFlex will notify the organization of their selection and provide an overview of the contracting process. (Issuance of subawards to proposals submitted in response to this Special Call is contingent upon the continued availability of U.S. government funding.)

Submitted Proposers will have the option to sign a Mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement to receive contractual documents for review in advance of the selection process in order to expedite any prospective negotiation.

SECTION 6: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Once project performer has been selected, NextFlex will create an agreement that incorporates the proposer's Final Proposal and Budget. The subrecipient will be responsible for implementing its Scope of Work. NextFlex will provide oversight and monitoring.

SECTION 7: REPORTING

The subrecipient will be required to deliver monthly financial and technical reports to NextFlex, as well as a final technical and financial report. NextFlex will compile reports and will submit monthly and final reports to OSD ManTech.

SECTION 8: CONTACT INFORMATION

Communication and questions during the proposal period and submission of proposals should be directed by email to proposal@nextflex.us, addressed to Courtney Power.

SECTION 9: SPECIAL CALL DOCUMENT LIST

The following documents are relevant to the submission process:

1. Detailed Research Plan (DRP)
2. Cost Proposal, Attachment A