Request for Information (RFI)
Occupational Training Providers for Grads2Careers

Release Date: December 9, 2021
Submission Deadline: January 12, 2022

Purpose & Statement of Need

Grads2Careers, a partnership initiative of Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools), The Mayor’s Office on Employment Development (MOED), and Baltimore’s Promise, is requesting information from organizations offering occupational training in the fields of Information Technology, Construction, Pharmacy Tech, and Biotechnology.

Grads2Careers is seeking information to identify potential partners for Grads2Careers, an initiative that seeks to establish a pathway for City Schools graduates who are not enrolled in four-year colleges or universities into well paying, high-demand and high-growth occupations in the city and region. Grads2Careers funds occupational skills training and additional services supporting participant success. On a systems level, the initiative seeks to: 1) to create a pathway connecting Baltimore City youth to career tracks that lead to family-supporting wage, and 2) to align education and employment systems to create a pathway from City Schools to occupational skills training programs to employment for 18-21-year-old population seeking to enter the workforce.

From 2018 to 2021, Grads2Careers implemented three overlapping implementation cycles in its first phase. This RFI is to identify partners for the first cycle of Phase II (September 2021 to September 2022). No contracts will be awarded based solely on the responses to this RFI; however, information obtained in this RFI process will directly impact Grads2Careers in determining the contracted partners providing occupational skills training for Phase II, Cycle I of Grads2Careers.

Background

In 2017, Baltimore’s Promise published a research brief titled Gaining Traction after High School Graduation: Understanding the Post-Secondary Pathways for Baltimore’s Youth. Conducted by researchers at the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC) and the Institute for Education Policy at Johns Hopkins University, the report examined the paths of Baltimore City Public Schools high school class of 2009 at two stages: in the fall after high school graduation and six years after graduation.
This research found that 26% of graduates neither enrolled in college nor entered the workforce in the semester after graduating high school. Of these graduates, the average median income earnings by 2017 was only $11,000 per year. Furthermore, out of all 2009 City Schools graduates, 10% earned a four-year degree. This 10% holds large gaps in degree completion between African American/Black and White graduates. For example, of men who graduated from city schools and obtained a degree after six years, 8% were African-American and 26% were non-African American. The proportion of city schools 2009 graduates who earn a living wage was low for all groups, regardless of degree attainment.

To address these findings, prevent disconnection after high school, and increase the employment rate and earnings of City Schools graduates, Grads2Careers began implementation of its first phase in 2018. Grads2Careers is a collaborative initiative of Baltimore's Promise, the MOED, and City Schools that works to ensure that young adults can access employment opportunities in the city and overcome barriers that may stand in their way. Specifically, Grads2Careers connects recent graduates to occupational skills training programs that prepare them for jobs on a career track in high-growth sectors.

Midway through the first cycle of Grads2Careers, program staff added a summer remediation component to the initiative in order to meet the needs of participants. Grads2Careers staff realized that a significant number of potential participants did not meet the academic eligibility requirements for the training programs and lacked middle school-level proficiency in reading and math. Because of the need to increase math and reading proficiency of Grads2Careers participants, summer remediation and centralized testing are now a main component of Grads2Careers, Phase II.

Grads2Careers is currently in the midst of implementing Phase II, Cycle 1. The Grads2Careers focus population of Cycle 1 fit the following requirements:

- Baltimore City High School Graduates (Class of 2021);
- Baltimore City Resident; and
- Not planning to enroll or currently enrolled in a two or four-year college at the present time

A secondary population eligible for occupational skills-training slots funded by Grads2Careers are young adults, ages 18 to 21, who have graduated within 18 months of the Class of 2021’s graduation date and are Baltimore City residents. The focus and secondary population will change in Cycle 2 to align with the Class of 2022, and in Cycle 3, with the Class of 2023.

The purpose of this RFI is to identify organizations that will provide high quality, developmentally appropriate job training that is differentiated to the needs of young adults for Phase II, Cycle 1, and pending strong outcomes, continued partnership through Cycles 2 and 3. Successful programs will recruit individuals in the focus population for Grads2Careers to become participants of their training programs and support program participants with wraparound services that address participants’ needs and barriers. Successful programs will place
graduates of their training programs into well-paying jobs in high-growth occupations and will offer job retention services to help ensure long-term success.

**Minimum Qualifications**

To be a contracted partner of Grads2Careers, your organization/program must meet and be able to demonstrate the following qualifications through this RFI or subsequent vetting processes:

- 2-3 years of experience in delivering high quality workforce development models and/or older youth development programs (ages 16-24);
- Ability to offer industry-recognized occupational credential or certification and/or provide in-demand skills that lead to employment in high-demand, career-track occupations with the potential to pay a family-supporting wage;
- Willingness to work in partnership with a system of centralized recruitment through a Participant Support Coordinator shared by MOED and City Schools, in addition to recruiting eligible participants directly;
- Capacity to collect, record, and report data using Grads2Careers data collection system (currently this is ETO but may be subject to change);
- Ability to build employer relationships with evidence of employment placements (must provide letters of support from at least two employers with description of engagement with the program)
- Demonstrated track record of implementing an effective case management model that links to wraparound supports that reduce barriers to employment for the focus population. This may include barriers related to transportation, child care, financial counseling, health/behavioral health, legal services, and/or other areas specific to the participants and industry sector. If applicants have not partnered with organizations for this purpose before, they must demonstrate a clear and convincing willingness and ability to do so
- Demonstrated track record of providing, or partnering with organizations that provide wraparound supports;
- Evidence of understanding the importance of positive youth development practices (and ability to describe how those are or will be incorporated);
- Track record of strong employment outcomes (>70% completion, of those completing >70% placement with a clear plan for post-placement support as needed for both the individual as well as employers); and
- Ability to track job placement retention for a minimum of one-year post placement.

This RFI is seeking information specifically for programs offering training, credentialing, and job placement in the fields of *Information Technology, Construction, Pharmacy Tech, and Biotechnology.*
Response Requirements

Grads2Careers will evaluate responses received through this RFI to determine if there are offerings that can be implemented in alignment with the requirements of Grads2Careers. It is Grads2Careers' intention to contact the respondents that best meet these requirements and facilitate the exchange of additional information for the purpose of determining contracting viability.

Responses should be compiled in a document not to exceed five pages. Responses should include all of the following information:

1. Organizational overview, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Organizational mission
   b. Years of operation, and # of years operating high quality workforce development models and/or youth development programs (ages 16-24)
   c. Past significant efforts relevant to the work of Grads2Careers

2. Training program information, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Summary of program and description of credential received
      i. If no credential is received, describe how you ensure your training is aligned with industry standards
   b. Rationale for program and credential: what is the market demand for individuals credentialed through the training you offer?
   c. Existing track record: provide evidence of strong completion and employment outcomes (of those enrolled, >70% completion, and of those completing, >70% job placement with a clear plan for post-placement support as needed for both the individual as well as employers)
   d. Overview of existing and past employer partners
      i. While employer letters are not required for this RFI, please note that organizations receiving follow up to their responses will be asked to submit two employer partner letters verifying the employer's commitment to the organization, training track, and hiring of program graduates.
   e. Cohort size - what is the minimum and maximum number of individuals served through a cohort?
   f. Cohort duration (weeks)
   g. Cohort weekly time commitment in terms of frequency and training hours (e.g. classes twice a week, typically for four hours in either morning from 9 AM to 1 PM or evening from 4 - 8 PM)
   h. Location of program
   i. Instructional staff to participant ratio
   j. Program staff to participant ratio with summary of program staff functions

3. Case Management information, including but not limited to the following:
   a. Description of case management supports communicated to participants - what do they have access to, and how frequently?
b. Structure of case management supports
   i. Is this a contracted function (and if so, please describe the service requirements of the contract) or in-house?
   ii. What is the case management to participant ratio?

c. Evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of your case management model

d. Amount of time following graduation that the program offers A) case management support and B) employment support, inclusive of employment tracking

4. Cost
   a. Average cost per participant
   b. Funding sources leveraged currently or in the past to support the cost-per-participant amount, and the average percentage of the cost-per-participant amount supported by each funding source

**Submitting Responses**

Responses to this RFI are to be submitted electronically through this online form: [www.baltimorespromise.org/g2c-phase2-rfi](http://www.baltimorespromise.org/g2c-phase2-rfi). Responses must be submitted no later than January 12, 2022 by 5:00 PM ET.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) notice only. This is not a Request for Proposal (RFP). No solicitation is available at this time. Baltimore’s Promise will not reimburse organizations for costs related to preparing their response.

**All responses must be submitted by 5:00 PM ET on January 12, 2022.**

**Submitting Questions**

Questions concerning this RFI may be submitted through email to catherine@baltimorespromise.org until January 7, 2022. Please include the subject line “G2C RFI” to ensure your request is appropriately routed.

**Please note that Baltimore’s Promise is closed from December 23, 2021 to January 4, 2022.** All questions submitted during this time period will receive responses on January 5, 2022 in the order they were received.

All questions asked and answered will be posted in [this online Q&A document](#) by January 10, 2022 at 10:00 AM ET.