



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL 24-01**  
**ONLINE PLATFORM(S) AND OTHER PARTICIPANT AIDES FOR**  
**“GOOD JOBS 4 THE CENTRAL VALLEY”**



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## Overview

The Economic Development Corporation Serving Fresno County (EDC) seeks proposals from qualified vendors to design and implement customized online platform(s) for career navigation, case management, and methods of aiding participants through referrals and/or grant-funded supportive services (referred to hereafter as **THE PLATFORM(S)**) as part of the *Good Jobs 4 The Central Valley* workforce development program funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge (2022).

**THE PLATFORM(S)** will potentially serve several important functions including acting as the project's career navigation aide, case management data entry platform, participant tracking system, and potentially facilitate invoicing for vendors providing case management as well as other supportive services.

The Scope of Work provided below outlines several **unique elements** EDC seeks to include in the region's Good Jobs project. These elements are presented in more detail below and these desired services may be fulfilled by one lead applicant vendor, multiple lead applicant vendors, or a combination of lead(s) and subcontractor(s). Services not specifically specified in the elements described below but complimentary of the overall project will also be considered for funding if they are deemed additive to the work at EDC's sole discretion.

This RFP requests one or more vendors provide platform(s) to support the Good Jobs project in the region. Vendors are encouraged to bid in whatever manner best suits their capacity and expertise, given the timeline of the project and available funds. Vendors may submit a proposal to provide one platform that addresses one required element of the scope of work, one platform that addresses multiple elements of the scope of work, or multiple platforms that address multiple elements of the scope of work. Vendors may also include partners to support either a component of the scope of work or one or more element of the scope of work.

Vendors may only submit one proposal, with a clearly identified lead applicant, and a vendor may not appear as a lead applicant in one proposal and a subcontractor in another proposal. All proposals must include the proposed lead applicant and subcontractors, if applicable, by organizational name and include the address of their headquarters as well as main point of contact and contact information for each organization.

## Anticipated Timeline

EDC will issue this RFP on **May 8, 2024**, and close the RFP to all bidders on **June 6, 2024, at 12pm (NOON) Pacific Time**. EDC anticipates contracting with successful bidders in **June 2024**. Questions may be submitted with the Subject Line: "GOOD JOBS RFP – ONLINE PLATFORMS" to the email address listed below on or before **May 15, 2024**. Questions which can be answered in compliance with rules and regulations, at EDC's sole discretion, may also be shared on an FAQ on or before **May 20, 2024**, on the Good Jobs page of EDC's website. It will be the responsibility of applicants to monitor the website for this FAQ, should EDC elect to provide this update.

Bidders should clearly outline their proposed timeline for implementation for each phase and element (or project), if submitting multiple elements or projects. Proposals that demonstrate a plausible rapid

deployment of some or all their services will be prioritized. EDC reserves the right to request additional information and/or clarification from bidders prior to concluding the evaluation of proposals.

The region's Good Jobs Challenge project currently anticipates providing services through **September 2026**, but may be extended in the event funding remains available or new local, state, federal, or philanthropic funds have been obtained to continue some or all the region's scope of work activities. Contracts are anticipated to run from **July 2024 through September 2026** (approximately 27 months) with optional monthly or yearly extensions at EDC's sole discretion and contingent upon the availability of funds. As such, proposals should include all anticipated costs from contract execution to September 2026 as well as monthly and yearly renewal costs thereafter.

## Available Funds

EDC has available approximately **\$600,000** in federal, state, or other funds for the projects outlined in this RFP. Additional funds may become available depending upon the needs of the Good Jobs project or other similar projects and other obtained grants or funds. Please note that this RFP requests several elements within its Scope of Work and the current allotted funds are intended to support all these elements for at least two years if not longer. EDC may elect at its sole discretion to reduce this allocation of funds depending upon the strengths of the submitted proposals.

## Background

The Fresno County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is a public-private nonprofit organization established in 1981 to market Fresno County as the premier location for business prosperity, specializing in business attraction, expansion, and retention, as well as workforce development.

In 2022, Fresno EDC secured \$23 million in workforce development funding through the EDA's Good Jobs Challenge (GJC), a branch of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Good Jobs Challenge is intended to get more Americans engaged in the labor market and to improve not only participant outcomes but also economic and business development outcomes. These complimentary goals will be accomplished by providing high-quality participant support alongside industry-designed training programs to build skills in regional labor markets. The Central Valley project will ultimately support the training and subsequent job placement of 2,500 participants into high-quality jobs across multiple sectors, including construction, manufacturing, transportation, and business services. The exact number of occupational categories for this project is not yet determined. It is likely that each industry sector will have between 3 to 5 occupational pathways in which most participants are engaged in training and career navigation services although that number may increase depending on the needs of industry and participants. The anticipated number of partnering organizations using the services provided through this RFP is likely to exceed one dozen unique organizations, many with the need for multiple user accounts to administer or monitor services.

Good Jobs participants have access to a wide range of supportive or wraparound services throughout their training and at least 90 days after an initial placement is made. These services include providing access to childcare, transportation, work-related supplies, and career navigation assistance. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the GJC network bring invaluable assets to the table, including community credibility and experience following a 2Gen approach to case management and whole family economic prosperity. This project includes a novel approach to partnering with CBOs. Specifically, smaller sized

CBOs are participating as vendors providing one or more components of workforce development related case management and wraparound services. Consolidating CBO reporting with data from training providers and employers would be helpful to the coordination of this project.

*Good Jobs 4 the Central Valley* moved into its implementation phase, providing direct training and supportive services to participants, in December 2023. As of March 2024, the project had enrolled approximately 250 participants in training with a goal of placing 2,500 participants in high-quality careers by September 30, 2026.

## Scope of Work

As *Good Jobs 4 the Central Valley* ramps up services in the implementation phase, EDC seeks to procure one or more online platforms that will complement and facilitate various activities related to the Good Jobs Challenge as well as other currently operating or potential local, state, federal, and privately funded initiatives.

The proposed platforms will consist of **three elements**, ranked in order of their prioritization:

- I. Participant-facing **career navigation platform** including Good Jobs funded and potentially also other training programs. This platform should help potential participants evaluate various career pathways based on their own interests, aptitude, and available training programs (including wait times to enroll, length of program, eligibility requirements, etc.). This platform should also help to elevate skills-based hiring and transferable skills rather than the current labor market's tendency to rely solely on credentials. The ability for training providers (from an Eligible Provider List as well as from subaward and subcontractors) to post upcoming open seats, cohorts, and other program details for potential participants receiving case management would be beneficial as well.
- II. **Case management and participant tracking / reporting platform** with invoicing capabilities for vendor services (e.g., case management<sup>1</sup>, supportive services<sup>2</sup>, etc.). Multiple organizations would need to have login credentials for this platform, with EDC able to operate as an administrator. Functionality to directly contact participants, e.g., through SMS, from the platform would be preferred but is not a requirement for the project.
- III. **Online job board** for participating Good Jobs employers. Like Element I, this platform should help to elevate skills-based hiring and transferable skills rather than the current labor market's tendency to rely solely on credentials.

Elements I and II are prioritized. Element III is included if sufficient funds remain, new funds are identified, or a compelling proposal is made that combines Element III with another element and adequate funding is available to the project.

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<sup>1</sup> CBO Case Management Services and corresponding milestones that will be eligible for compensation once realized may include but are not necessarily limited to career assessments, career navigation, barrier remediation (including use of funded supportive services and other leveraged services), training placement, and job placement.

<sup>2</sup> Supportive Services available for this grant include but are not necessarily limited to transportation assistance, childcare, and work/training related supplies.

Additional details on the desired but not necessarily required functionality for each of the above Elements are provided later in this RFP.

## Why It Matters

With recent advancements made in automation and artificial intelligence (AI), the U.S. job market is expected to see significant long-term changes in its composition. Historically, technological advancements have furthered inequities in society, as new jobs created by such advancements often require college degrees and other high-level credentials to obtain. While automation and AI in particular poses a threat to the job security for workers in many occupations, it also presents an opportunity to help mitigate barriers that have resulted in **occupational segregation**, namely, customized access to actionable information.

Occupational segregation hinders workforce and economic development by limiting the number of potential candidates available to a business with workforce needs. The three Elements included in this RFP are intended to not only help more Americans find and succeed in high-quality career pathways but also address occupational segregation, retention in employment / career pathways, and address labor market needs for both workers and businesses during this era of unprecedented labor market changes and challenges.

Proposals should focus on reducing systemic and structural barriers to high-quality careers by effectively communicating assets and available resources, including training offerings and wraparound supports. Platforms should help contextualize these opportunities to diverse audiences and the organizations that serve them including but not necessarily limited to underrepresented workers, persons with disabilities, and persons who are not yet highly proficient with English.

## Desired Functionality for Elements I, II, and III

The functionality listed below are representative and not a requirement. Functionality not listed below may nonetheless be deemed responsive to this RFP. At the same time, a bid addressing all the functionality listed in one or more elements may not be successful in obtaining the contract due to the broad range of factors included in this RFP's Evaluation Criteria.

Technical features are representative and responses with comparable capacity to meet the intent of the technical features section will be considered responsive to this proposal for further consideration.

Each proposal should clearly identify the design and launch timeline for the proposed element, or for each element if proposing to address more than one element, and the additional hourly costs for technical assistance, if applicable, after the launch of each element. The proposal should also make clear what ongoing expenses would look like to maintain the platform(s) and the degree to which EDC would be able to administer the platform(s) at little to no additional costs, if applicable.

## **Element I: Customized career exploration, interest and aptitude assessments, training pathway exploration**

- Interactive content that provides an overview of occupations, entry requirements, job duties, expected compensation, and prospects for ongoing career development including future earnings and anticipated occupational demand.
- Career assessment tools ideally would be based on a reputable taxonomy model of vocational interests and include transferable skills pathways as well as participant skills gap assessments.
- Training pathway recommendations for relevant educational and training programs upon completion of an initial career assessment. This tool should provide information on applicable programs offered in the GJC service region as well as other potential leveraged programs both short-term and long-term in nature.
- Preloaded informational modules for occupations related to construction, manufacturing, transportation, and business services, the region's GJC sectors. Inclusion of other sectors may be requested if additional funding is obtained or allocated to the project. Modules may include transferable skills leading to career transitions into these industries, what it is like at a typical workplace, how to navigate ongoing professional development within each field, etc. Many partners and programs provide support in this area as well. As such, these videos will be informational in nature, developed by project partners and the successful bidder, and assist current and potential participants in better understanding the overall program.
- Soft skills modules highlighting the importance of such durable skills as resume-building and professional development. As well as other durable skills like adaptability, resiliency, communications, reliability, teamwork, and decision-making. Many partners and programs provide support in this area as well. As such, these videos will be informational in nature, developed by project partners and the successful bidder, and assist current and potential participants in better understanding the overall program.
- Co-branded landing page for the Central Valley region and Good Jobs initiative.
- Proposed data integrations, if applicable, with other platforms / elements of this RFP.

## **Element I: Technical Features**

- Content management system (CMS) that allows authorized users to upload, edit, and manage custom content using a basic rich text editor.
- Enabled version control and audit trail functionality.
- Sitewide search functionality that enables users to easily navigate to desired content.
- Defined user roles for all stakeholders including program/system administrators, employers, and job seekers with specified permissions sets.
- Bespoke web portal with a simplified account registration process and input controls.
- Secure two-factor user authentication system for user accounts with critical access features.
- Ability to integrate with third-party online skills training providers.
- User analytics to track and monitor client participation, as well as the platform's overall utilization, with raw data accessible in CSV format or other forms of data integration.
- Support for real-time report generation and dashboarding.
- **Accessibility:**

- The platform should be compatible with and optimized for both mobile devices and desktop computers.
- All content on the platform, including text, images, and videos should be translated into a variety of languages, prioritizing those languages most spoken in the Central Valley 4-County region. The costs for this customization should be addressed in the proposal.
- All materials should be ADA and Section 508 compliant.

**Element II: Case management and participant tracking / reporting platform** with invoicing capabilities for vendor services. Multiple organizations would need to have login credentials for this platform, with EDC able to operate as an administrator. Functionality to directly contact participants, e.g., via SMS, from the platform would be preferred but is not a requirement for the project.

The successful bidder will be provided contracts, ad hoc reporting templates, and access to program staff to help move development of this platform along as quickly as possible. The successful bidder will also receive guidance on which features to prioritize to create a minimum viable product for early implementation.

### **Intake and Case Management System**

- Develop an intuitive system for community-based organizations (CBOs) and case managers to track referrals, administer and record intake and periodic assessments, case management notes, and service needs for program participants, as well as view/share sensitive client information and related documentation if approvals are obtained.
- Implement an invoicing system for contracted CBOs to request reimbursements for services provided to Good Jobs program participants based upon agreed milestones in case management and workforce development services. Documentation would be uploaded by the CBOs alongside some requests for reimbursements as supporting evidence of service delivery for auditing and program monitoring purposes.
- Implement a services request form to allow CBOs to request supportive services for their eligible participants and facilitate the issuance of these services. Providing a database of possible supportive service providers approved for funding by the project would also be helpful.
- Implement a centralized dashboard for EDC, participating organizations, and case managers to monitor system-wide, organizational, and case load progress and potential bottlenecks.

### **User Authentication and Access Controls**

- Establish a secure, two-factor login mechanism for CBOs, case managers, program/system administrators, etc. with role-based permission sets to ensure data confidentiality and integrity is maintained.

### **Communication and Collaboration**

- Integrate communication tools such as SMS, direct messaging, and notifications to facilitate the flow of information between CBOs, case managers, and program participants.
- Implement features for real-time updates on referral status between organizations registered on the platform, service delivery progress, and documenting any changes in client circumstances. Provision for the intentional distribution of participant information contingent



upon his or her approval so that another organization can provide services without requiring the participant to re-apply or re-share background information.

### **Data Analytics and Reporting**

- Design robust reporting functionalities to track key metrics and measure outcomes, such as referral volumes, training program interests, participant availability for scheduling enrollments and meetings, and service utilization rates.
- Provide customizable dashboards for administrators and managers at multiple levels to monitor program performance and identify areas for improvement. Provide comparable dashboarding for case managers to monitor their caseloads and items such as pending tasks, upcoming meetings, retention contacts, etc.

### **Integration with External Systems**

- Allow for integration with third party databases such as Microsoft Dynamics 365. The proposals pertaining to this Element should describe the capacity of their platform for data integrations in detail or provide a timeline and costs for integrations to common systems, if applicable.

### **Training and Support**

- Develop comprehensive training materials on the proposed platform and conduct training sessions for CBO staff, case managers, and administrators.
- Provide ongoing technical support and troubleshooting assistance to address any platform-related issues.

### **Customization and Scalability**

- The platform ideally would be customizable to align with the unique workflows and processes of each participating CBO, and to accommodate future changes in program requirements. To save project costs, EDC staff would be the preferred administrators to edit workflows, add new fields, etc. with the vendor offering technical assistance at a billable hour rate after product launch and only when required.
- The platform should be scalable to support the growth of the CBO referral network and evolving program needs.

### **Security and Compliance**

- Implement robust security measures to safeguard sensitive client information, ensuring compliance with relevant data protection regulations and industry standards.

### **Accessibility**

- The platform should be compatible with and optimized for both mobile devices and desktop computers, offer basic translation functionality, and be ADA and Section 508 compliant.

**Element III: Online job board** for participating Good Jobs employers and project administrators. Like Element I, this platform should help to elevate skills-based hiring and transferable skills rather than the current labor market's tendency to rely solely on credentials. Functionality listed below also shares some commonality with Element II. Please note that Elements I and II are project priorities.

### **Job Posting Functionality**

- Develop a user-friendly interface for participating employers to advertise open positions in a private online portal. Include the ability to specify job details, location, requirements related to skills and experience, and application instructions in the form.
- Implement a comprehensive job management system to track and organize posted positions (e.g., options for industry and skills filters, visibility based on potential matches to searches and candidate profiles, time stamps).
- Allow employers to search for Job Candidates and push messages to assist with recruitment.
- Provide EDC administrators with the ability to add customized fields and integrate those fields into existing filters and searches.
- Provide employers with the ability to collect and report hiring wages and/or job retention at periodic intervals including using notifications.

### **Job Search Functionality**

- Enable job seekers to create profiles, upload resumes, and submit application forms directly through the platform.
- Implement robust search and filtering options, allowing job seekers to search for relevant postings based on criteria such as location, industry, and skills.
- Allow users to view job postings on an integrated GIS-enabled map, as well as in list form.
- Provide job seekers with personalized recommendations on which open positions to apply for based on the skills and experience listed on their profile(s).
- Provide EDC administrators with the ability to add customized fields and integrate those fields into existing filters and searches.

### **Case Management Functionality**

- Allow case managers to update sensitive client records pertaining to program hires and terminations, add case notes, and create invoices.
- Allow case managers to conduct eligibility screening for newly registered job seekers.
- Implement an invoice management system to track job seeker requests for related supportive services or reimbursements owed to employers on a per month, per hire basis. Include options for performance review and timesheet entry.
- Include a public audit log to keep track of all changes made to client records, such as updating a job seeker's employment status.
- Provide EDC or partner agencies with the ability to collect and report hiring wages and/or job retention at periodic intervals including using notifications.

### **User Accounts**

- Establish a secure account registration process for case managers, program managers, administrators, employers, and job seekers that includes input controls to ensure data integrity.
- Create role-based permission sets for employers, job seekers, system/program administrators, job specialists, and job analysts.
- Allow users with certain roles to create new user accounts on behalf of others. A link to reset password ought to be sent to the email listed.

- Enable two-factor authentication for all users once registered.

### **Communication Tools**

- Integrate direct messaging and push notifications to facilitate communication between employers, job seekers, and case managers.
- Provide automated email notifications for application status updates, job recommendations, and other relevant information.

### **Analytics and Reporting**

- Allow program administrators and job analysts to export data tables into downloadable CSV or Excel files.
- Include dashboards for program admins, program managers, and case managers to monitor various activities, including job postings, hires, terminations, and invoices.

### **Training and Support**

- Develop training materials for employers, job seekers, and program administrators, outlining the best practices for using the platform effectively.
- Conduct 2-3 initial training sessions for EDC staff and partnering organizations. Training should be recorded and made available for the life of the contract including any mutually agreed upon contract extensions.
- Provide ongoing technical support to address any platform-related issues. Each proposal should clearly identify the design and launch timeline for each element and the hourly costs for technical assistance, if applicable, after the launch of each element.

### **Customization and Accessibility**

- The platform should offer a basic customization interface for system administrators to utilize, including branding, design, and layout options, as well as the ability to compose informational posts and feature open job positions on the platform's homepage.
- The platform should be compatible with and optimized for mobile devices and desktop computers, offer basic translation functionality, and be ADA and Section 508 compliant.

## **Submission Requirements and Evaluation**

Interested parties should submit their proposals by **June 6, 2024, at 12pm (NOON) Pacific Time.**

Proposals should include the following to be considered for this contract:

- Company profile including relevant experience in workforce development and providing solutions for career navigation and/or case management.
- Experience with following EDA grant regulations and procurement policies.
- Samples of previous work for similar projects (hyperlinks OK).
- No fewer than three references from clients for whom similar work has been performed, in both size and scope. References should include name, organization, project title, and contact information including phone and email.
- Proposed approach to building a customized solution for one or more project elements.

- Proposed project timeline with key milestones and deliverables.
- Detailed cost proposal including a not-to-exceed price for each proposed element or the overall project if proposing to address more than one element with a single integrated project.

### Cost Proposal

- Vendors must provide a complete cost proposal for each applicable element(s) based on the scope of work set forth in this RFP.
- Provide a cost breakdown for the overall project by task and/or deliverable, including any costs for content preparation, platform design, development, testing, and ongoing support.
- Additional expenses will not be allowed unless specified in the proposal; the total cost shall be stated as not-to-exceed price.

### Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on a combination of the following items:

- Vendor’s relevant experience in supporting workforce development or other similar initiatives.
- Clarity and feasibility of the proposed approach (especially true if submitting proposals for multiple project elements).
- Innovation and expertise in project design.
- Project timeline and milestone feasibility. Please note that projects that plausibly propose to quickly deploy part or whole of their work will be prioritized in the evaluation process.
- Cost-effectiveness and transparency in pricing structure.
- Quality of previous work.

Please note that the EDC intends to award the contract to the proposing firm whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the Good Jobs Challenge initiative and its stakeholders, after considering both technical merit and cost effectiveness. Proposals that deviate substantially from the scope of work outlined in this RFP will not be considered. EDC does not anticipate allowing a proposal that is deemed to be non-responsive to be amended and resubmitted. Determination of which proposals are responsive and application of the evaluation criteria in reviewing proposals will be based on EDC’s sole discretion.

### Contract Terms

The EDC anticipates entering into a contract with the selected vending firm or firms for this project. The contract will outline terms and conditions, project deliverables, payment schedule, and other relevant details. Interested parties should provide a sample contract or professional services agreement for this project in their proposal.

### Proposal Responsiveness

The degree to which a proposal is deemed responsive and how it is evaluated will be at the sole discretion of EDC and any partners or individuals selected to assist in the evaluation process. EDC may elect to refrain from awarding funds for one or more element in this proposal at its sole discretion.

### Submission Deadline and Questions

EDC will issue this RFP on **May 8, 2024**, and close the RFP to all bidders on **June 6, 2024, at 12pm (NOON) Pacific Time**. EDC anticipates contracting with successful bidders in **June 2024**.

## Questions

Questions may be submitted with the Subject Line: “GOOD JOBS RFP – ONLINE PLATFORMS” to the email address listed below on or before **May 15, 2024**. Questions which can be answered in compliance with rules and regulations, at EDC’s sole discretion, will be shared on an FAQ on or before **May 20, 2024**, on the Good Jobs page of EDC’s website. It is the responsibility of the applicant to check EDC’s website for the FAQ section or page, should EDC elect to post such a resource.

## Proposals

All responses should be submitted via email to Christopher Zeitz, Vice President of Workforce Development at [czeitz@fresnoedc.com](mailto:czeitz@fresnoedc.com)

The Subject Line for submitted proposals should be “GOOD JOBS RFP – SUBMISSION – ONLINE PLATFORMS”

Submissions will be accepted in Microsoft Word or PDF format, with hyperlinks included to evaluate previous work. No corrections or modifications to the submitted proposal will be accepted after the due date.

While the EDC shall endeavor to keep any confidential information private, it reserves the right to release the name of all consultants, as well as a summary of their proposals, to interested third party entities by request or to aid in the selection process or as required by law, regulations, and requirements of any current or future project funder(s).

For all inquiries pertaining to this RFP, please contact Christopher Zeitz at [czeitz@fresnoedc.com](mailto:czeitz@fresnoedc.com)