

Request for Proposals Advancing the The National Career Clusters Framework® Validation Communications Support

Due Date: November 27, 2023

Overview

Advance CTE seeks a firm/contractor to provide strategic communications planning, advisement, and development support for resources to effectively communicate the intent and impact of a modernized National Career Clusters® Framework to a variety of stakeholder audiences.

Introduction

In December 2022, Advance CTE launched [an initiative](#) to modernize the [National Career Clusters® Framework](#) (the Framework). This new initiative seeks to update the existing Framework to better reflect the current and future world of work, serve learners at all levels and act as a bridge and common language between education and industry.

The current Framework has been adopted in some form by all 50 states to inform the design of Career Technical Education (CTE) programs that serve over 12 million learners across the country from middle school through postsecondary education. While primarily used by state and district Career Technical Education (CTE) professionals, the Framework is informed and impacted by industry, educators, school counseling and career advising professionals, education technology vendors, and education and workforce partners at the federal, state and local level.

Since the launch of the modernization effort, in concert with two national partners, WestEd and Indigo Education Company, Advance CTE has [developed structures](#) to execute a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and input process, including a National Advisory Committee, Industry Advisory Groups, user focus groups and a survey on the current use of the Framework.

From January to June 2024, a drafted modernized framework will undergo an intensive feedback and validation process with stakeholders, including a national, public validation survey. Comprehensive, proactive and transparent engagement and communication is essential to the success of this project. Advance CTE seeks

external communications support to design, execute and/or assist in meeting emergent communications needs throughout the stakeholder feedback and validation activities.

Scope of Work

To ensure a meaningful and successful validation process, Advance CTE is issuing this RFP to identify a firm/contractor to provide strategic communications support through the following activities:

- Development and execution of a *plan to assess and anticipate stakeholder engagement needs and risks*, as well as strategies for *responding to those needs through strategic communications*.
- Development and execution of a *communications plan for emergent internal and external project events* to proactively identify barriers to project success.
- Thought partnership (review, refinement, and advising) on *message development* to effectively and proactively communicate project progress, validation activities, and the intent and evidence behind the draft modernized Framework.
- Thought partnership on a *communications plan for validation phase* activities.
- *Development of communications tools* for use during the validation phase of the project, including but not limited to talking points, fact sheets, graphics, slide decks, promotional toolkits, etc.
- *Development of communications tools* and supporting materials to communicate the overall project and proposed Framework, including but not limited to talking points, fact sheets, graphics, slide decks, promotional toolkits, etc.
- Thought partnership on *leveraging private and public champions* of the Advancing the Framework initiative and/or the modernized Framework

Budget

Please include a draft budget with your proposal that outlines costs, including labor and deliverables for each of the items listed above over a six month window (January-June 2024). The budget should total no more than \$50,000.

Qualifications

Required

- Experience developing messages about career readiness and career-focused education at the high school and/or postsecondary level

- Experience creating and advising proactive communication plans to mitigate both anticipated and unanticipated project events
- Experience messaging change management of a major product or initiative
- Adept at message development for complex stakeholder environments
- A robust project team to conduct frequent check-ins and timely, agile response to project needs
- Commitment to producing deliverables that are stakeholder-centered, digestible, and reinforce transparency about project priorities and progress.

Preferred

- Experience supporting education or industry partners in using one or more Career Clusters

Timeline

This proposal will adhere to the following timeline:

- Advance CTE will accept proposals through **November 27, 2023**.
- Advance CTE will hold an informational call to provide an overview of the project and answer questions on **Monday, November 20 from 2-3 p.m. ET**.
- Interviews with prospective applicants will occur Friday December 1, 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. ET; Tuesday, December 5, 3-5 p.m. ET; and Wednesday, December 6 12-2 p.m. ET. Interviews will last up to one hour.
- Advance CTE aims to select a contractor by December 11, 2023 and will work directly with the selected contractor to finalize the final approach and associated budget.
- A project kick-off with the selected vendor will be held in December 2023.
- The majority of deliverables will be produced between January and March 2024 in preparation for multiple and complex stakeholder input sessions occurring in January-February 2023, and a national validation survey conducted March-April 2024.
- The validation phase will conclude in June 2024.
- The final Framework will be released in Fall 2024.

Proposals

Proposals should not exceed five pages in length (not including staff bios, references or work samples). The proposal should include the official name, address, phone number, website and email address of the applicant (organization or individual) as well as the name of the principal contact person and the name and title of the person authorized to execute the contract.

Please include responses to the following questions in your proposal:

1. Explain your experience supporting clients in communicating career readiness and/or career-focused education. Include examples of topics/project needs, audience and outcomes. Why are you uniquely qualified to support this project, and how does the project goals align with your mission and values?
2. Provide a description of how you would approach this work, including a draft project timeline with recommended deliverables, anchor dates, and a draft budget. We prefer that timelines allow for two rounds of feedback for each deliverable unless the timeline requires a different approach.
3. Provide at least two examples of past visual and/or organizational work that align with the needs of this project.
4. Identify who will be involved on your project team, their role, their relevant experience. Please include bios (not counted in page limit) and demographics of key personnel. Links to staff profiles on organizational websites are permitted.

Conflict of Interest

Applicants agree that they or their employees do not currently have, nor will they have, any conflict of interest between themselves and Advance CTE or between them and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the funders of this work. Any perceived or potential conflict of interest must be disclosed in the proposal.

Contractual Agreement

Advance CTE will issue a contract with the selected applicant, in which the manner and time of payment will be addressed. Advance CTE only processes payments aligned to deliverables.

Ownership and Confidentiality

All intellectual property will become the property of Advance CTE, including all trademarks and copyrights. All data remains the sole property of Advance CTE. The contractor shall further agree to keep information related to any and all contracts with Advance CTE in strict confidence, including, but not limited to, the terms of the contract(s) and any confidential business information or proprietary information learned through its dealings with us.

About Advance CTE/The Center to Advance CTE

[Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work](#), first established in 1920, is the longest-standing national non-profit that represents State CTE Directors and state leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult Career Technical Education (CTE) across all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.

Mission: Support state CTE leadership to advance high-quality and equitable CTE policies, programs and pathways that ensure career and college success for each learner.

Vision: Advance CTE's vision is [Without Limits: A Shared Vision for the Future of Career Technical Education](#)

View Advance CTE's [statement](#) on equity in CTE.

Advance CTE will make efforts to utilize small businesses, as well as veteran-owned, woman-owned and/or minority-owned firms/organizations.

Contact

Contact Associate Director of Communications Stacy Whitehouse at swhitehouse@careertech.org with inquiries about the RFP or to submit a proposal. Questions about the proposal must be submitted by 12 p.m. ET on Wednesday, November 22, 2023 to receive a response prior to the submission deadline.