



Request for Applications (RFA): TOPS Tech Early Start Training Providers

Louisiana Department of Education
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Timetable for 2014-2015 TOPS Tech Early Start Training Provider RFA Processes

Process Step	Target Date	Process Step	Target Date
RFA released	Oct 16	Interviews Complete	Nov 21
Training Provider Webinars	Oct 17, Oct 21	WIC Review Complete	Nov 24
Application Period	Oct 16 – Nov 14	BESE Approval: TOPS Tech Training Providers	Dec 2 and 3
TOPS Tech training providers may submit a draft of their application for review by the LDE by Nov 7			

Register to receive all LDE communications on the TOPS Tech Early Start Training Providers RFA process:

JumpStart@la.gov

Louisiana Believes.

Overview of Act 737

Act 737, passed during the 2014 Legislative session, amended the TOPS Tech Early Start program so that:

A TOPS-Tech Early Start Award may be used to fund any technical or applied course leading to an Industry-Based Certification, a Certification of Applied Science and a Certificate of Technical Sciences offered at a Louisiana public or nonpublic secondary education institution or by any Louisiana training provider recognized by the Louisiana Workforce Commission and approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education . . .

§3048.5, Section B(1), page 5 of 8 line 9

and

The administering agency, on behalf of a TOPS-Tech Early Start Award recipient, shall pay to the Louisiana postsecondary education institution in which the student is enrolled in an eligible program of studies or a training program provide an amount of *one hundred fifty dollars for each three credit-hour or equivalent time course taken by the student* . . .

§3048.5, Section B(3), page 5 of 8 line 29 [emphasis added]

and

By January thirty-first annually, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall determine which training program providers it approves for the academic year that begins in the fall of that year.

§3048.5, Section B(4)(a), page 6 of 8 line 6

and

For the 2014-2015 academic year, the number of training program providers at which a TOPS-Tech Early Start Award may be used shall be limited to five providers as selected by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

§3048.5, Section B(4)(b), page 6 of 8 line 9

This RFA process will result in Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approval of TOPS Tech Early Start training providers for both the 2014-2015 school year and for the school years to follow.

Only up to five training providers will be approved by BESE to provide training courses to students during the Spring semester of the 2014-2015 school year.

More than five training providers may be approved by BESE to provide training courses to students starting during the 2015-2016 school year.

BESE approval for training providers will be for a term of three years, starting from the school year the training provider is first authorized to provide training courses under Act 737.

Overview of the Year 2 RFA Selection Processes

The table below outlines the parallel RFA processes for course providers and course incubators.

	TOPS Tech Early Start Training Provider RFA Process
Oct 16, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RFA released on LDE website
Oct 17 and Oct 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training provider RFA Webinars
Oct 16 to Nov 14 Application Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training providers submit their online applications Training providers may submit a draft online application until Nov 7 to receive LDE feedback
Oct 16 – Nov 21 Interview Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepted applicants participate in an in-person or video-conference interview
Nov 14 – Nov 21 WIC Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDE will meet with WIC to confirm their selection of training providers and secure legally-required “WIC recognition (§3048.5, Section B(1), page 5 line 14)
Dec 2 – 3, 2014 BESE Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BESE considers training providers recommended for approval by LDE

The three-phase training provider RFA process is:

- applications – training provider applications will be paperless, completed using the FluidReview portal. Training providers can access this online application portal at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/courses/jump-start-career-education>. Applicants will be allowed to submit a draft of their application to the LDE for review and comment no later than November 7;
- Interviews – training provider applicants who submit accepted applications will proceed to an LDE interview process. This interview may be in-person or via video-conference. Details of this interview process will be provided to training providers when they receive an acceptance notice for their application;
- WIC review – the LDE will review with WIC the training providers the Department intends to submit to BESE for approval. This will satisfy the Act 737 requirement that TOPS Tech Early Start training providers are “WIC recognized.”

Required Application Components / Required Application Format

The online TOPS Tech private course provider application will consist of the following sections:

Section	Application Section	Template Section Components
1	Application Summary Sheet	1.1 Organization Name 1.2 Primary Contact Person 1.3 Types of Training Services Provide (200 word limit) 1.4 Certifications Provided (200 word limit) 1.5 Modality of Instruction 1.6 Indicate Statewide or School Districts / Regions Served 1.7 Already a BESE-approved course provider?
2	Provider Background and Capabilities	2.1 Provider Background: history, years of operation, leadership, strengths (500 word limit) 2.2 Experience working with high school students (300 word limit) 2.3 Training Capabilities / Facilities (300 word limit) 2.4 Training Courses Offered 2.5 Background on Instructors – Recruiting, Background, Experience (300 word limit)
3	Provider Financial Structure / Strength	3.1 through 3.7: various questions to determine organizational structure, financial control systems and the training providers financial structure and strength
8	References	Three references that LDE will check for training providers that are WIC recognized and submitted to BESE for approval

1. Online Application Submission

1.1. *The submission of this application package will be electronic on the Fluid Review portal at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/courses/jump-start-career-education>*

1.2. Submission Protocols

1.2.1. Applications can be uploaded to the TOPS Tech RFA portal any time between 8 am CDT on October 16, 2014 until 5 pm CDT on November 14, 2014. **5pm CDT on November 14, 2014 is the Final Submission Deadline.**

1.2.2. It is solely the responsibility of all applicants to make sure their application is uploaded by the Final Submission Deadline. Applications that for any reason are not received by the Final Submission Deadline will not be considered. No appeals will be considered.

2. Applicant Code of Conduct

2.1. Applicants are responsible for determining that there will be no conflict or violation of the Ethics Code if the company is awarded the contract. Ethics issues are interpreted by the Louisiana Board of Ethics.

3. Public Disclosure

- 3.1.** All materials submitted in response to this request become the property of State. Selection or rejection of an application LDEs not affect this right.
- 3.2.** Only information that is in the nature of legitimate trade secrets or non-published financial data may be deemed proprietary or confidential. Any material within an application identified as such must be clearly marked in the applications and will be handled in accordance with the Louisiana Public Record Act, R.S. 44: 1-44 and applicable rules and regulations. Any application marked as confidential or proprietary in its entirety may be rejected without further consideration or recourse.
- 3.3.** By submitting, the applicant grants the State of Louisiana- Department of Education the right and license to republish its application, if the Department so chooses, as an example or sample application for the edification of other applicants. All identifiable references will be redacted prior to republication.

4. Determination of Responsibility

- 4.1.** Determination of the applicant's responsibility relating to this RFA shall be made according to the standards set forth in LAC 34: 136. The State must find that the applicant:
 - 4.1.1. Has adequate financial resources for performance, or has the ability to obtain such resources as required during performance.
 - 4.1.2. Has the necessary experience, organization, technical qualifications, skills, and facilities, or has the ability to obtain them.
 - 4.1.3. Is able to comply with the proposed or required time of delivery or performance schedule.
 - 4.1.4. Has a satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance.
 - 4.1.5. Is otherwise qualified and eligible to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations.

Applicants should ensure that their application contains sufficient information for the State to make its determination by presenting acceptable evidence of the ability to perform the services called for by this RFA.

5. Right to Prohibit Award

- 5.1.** In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 39:2192, in awarding contracts after August 15, 2010, any public entity is authorized to reject an application from, or not award the contract to, a business in which any individual with an ownership interest of five percent or more has been convicted of or has entered a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* to any state felony or equivalent federal felony crime committed in the solicitation or execution of a contract or bid awarded under the laws governing public contracts under the provisions of Chapter 10 of Title 38 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, professional, personal, consulting, and social services procurement under the provisions of Chapter 16 of this Title, or the Louisiana Procurement Code under the provisions of Chapter 17 of this Title.

6. RFA Addenda

6.1. The State reserves the right to change the calendar of events or revise any part of the RFA by issuing an addendum to the RFA at any time.

7. Waiver of Administrative Informalities

7.1. The State reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to waive administrative informalities contained in any applications.

8. Application Rejection

8.1. Issuance of this RFA in no way constitutes a commitment by the State to award a contract. The State reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or part, all applications submitted and/or cancel this announcement if it is determined to be in the State's best interest.

9. Withdrawal and Re-submission of Applications

9.1. An applicant may withdraw an application that has been submitted at any time up to the date and time the application is due. To accomplish this, a written request signed by the authorized representative of the applicant must be submitted to the RFA Coordinator.

10. Subcontracting Information

10.1. The State shall have a single prime contractor as the result of any contract negotiation, and that prime contractor shall be responsible for all deliverables referenced in its application. This general requirement notwithstanding, applicants may enter into subcontractor arrangements; however, they should acknowledge their total responsibility for the entire contract.

If the applicant intends to subcontract for portions of the work, the applicant should include specific designations of the tasks to be performed by the subcontractor. Information required of the applicant under the terms of this RFA may be required for each subcontractor.

10.2. Unless provided for in the contract with the State, the prime contractor shall not contract with any other party for furnishing any of the work and professional services herein contracted for without the express written approval of the State.

11. Cost of Preparing Applications

11.1. The State is not liable for any costs incurred by prospective applicants prior to issuance of or entering into a contract. Costs associated with developing an application, preparing for oral presentations and interviews, and any other expenses incurred by the applicants in responding to this RFA are entirely the responsibility of the applicants, and shall not be reimbursed in any manner by the State of Louisiana.

12. Errors and Omissions in Applications

12.1. The State will not be liable for any errors in applications. The State reserves the right to make corrections or amendments due to errors identified in applications by the State or the applicant. The State, at its option, has the right to request clarification or additional information from the applicants.

13. Corporation Requirements

13.1. If the contractor is a corporation not incorporated under the laws of the State of Louisiana, the contractor shall have obtained a certificate of authority pursuant to R. S. 12:301-302 from the Secretary of State of Louisiana.

If the contractor is a for-profit corporation whose stock is not publicly traded, the contractor shall ensure that a disclosure of ownership form has been properly filed with the Secretary of State of Louisiana.

Application Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria the LDE will use to determine which training providers it selects for WIC review and BESE approval will be:

“Comparative Assessment” Application Evaluation Criteria

- 1) Track record of training excellence by the organization and/or its leaders
- 2) Track record of training excellence with young adults
- 3) Match of training courses and credentials offered with high-wage career sectors
- 4) Quality of instruction
- 5) Organizational strength / ability to fulfill training obligations
- 6) Strength of references

A course provider’s application package will be accepted for interview if:

- the application package achieves a “pass” on all six evaluation criteria; and
- the application package conforms with all of the RFA’s administrative and legal requirements.

LDE will provide a detailed description of the interview evaluation process *only* to applicants who are accepted for an interview. These interview evaluation guidelines will explain how training providers can successfully move from the interview stage forward to the evaluations by WIC and BESE approval.

BESE is responsible for the final evaluation and approval (or rejection) of all training provider applications.

No appeals will be considered at any stage. All determinations of accepted / rejected applications and final BESE approval are final.