**DRAFT**

**Request for Applications**

RFA – 2018-19.1.2 and 1.3

**NC Employment Collaborative**

**FUNDING AGENCY: North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD)*,*** NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of the Secretary

**ISSUE DATE: May 14, 2018**

**DEADLINE DATE: June 20, 2018**

**Receipt of applications online at** [**www.ddsuite.org**](file:///C:\Users\SStrom\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\5J9DR2L6\www.ddsuite.org) **is preferred, but not required. All applications must be received by 5:00 pm EST on June 20, 2018. Please notify at least two weeks in advance of the due date if you need application materials in an alternate format or otherwise require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.**

Direct all inquiries concerning this Request for Applications (RFA) to:

**Mailing Address:**

NCCDD-RFA

North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities

3125 Poplarwood Court, Suite 200

Raleigh, NC 27604

**Via Email:** [RFAinfo@nccdd.org](mailto:RFAinfo@nccdd.org)

**Delivery Information:**

Applicants for this RFA are strongly encouraged to submit the application electronically in the DD Suite online database found at [**www.ddsuite.org**](file:///C:\Users\SStrom\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\5J9DR2L6\www.ddsuite.org). Applicants that submit in hard copy are responsible for including all required elements in the submission packet.

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

The NCCDD makes funds available to fulfill its mission in accordance with the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) and the Council’s Five-Year State Plan. The NCCDD’s major funding source is the United States Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The NCCDD makes funds available primarily through competitive bids or Requests for Applications (RFAs). A general description of the current RFA is included in this document. The complete RFA package is available through DD Suite ([www.ddsuite.org](https://www.ddsuite.org/?nofa_id=1247)) or may be requested in alternate formats or by mail. Please complete and submit the [Notification of Intent to Apply](mailto:RFAinfo@nccdd.org?subject=Intent%20to%20Apply:%20I%20Get%20Around%20_%20Improving%20Transportation%20Options%20RFA&body=My%20Organization%20intends%20to%20apply%20for%20the%20RFA.%20%20The%20contact%20information%20is%20listed%20below.%0D%0D%0DName(s):%20%0D%0DOrganization%20Name:%20%0D%0DAddress:%20%0D%0DCity/State/Zip%20Code:%20%0D%0DTelephone%20Number:%20%0D%0DFAX%20%23:%20%0D%0DE-mail%20Address:%20%0D%0D) if your organization or agency intends to apply.

Applications are welcomed from any university, non-profit, for profit, or government agency that demonstrates that their agency is qualified, responsible, and capable of conducting the activities described. Eligible entities include any organization, agency, or non-profit demonstrating an expertise in the focus area of this initiative. To be eligible, the non-profit private entity that is awarded this contract must submit proof of 501(c)(3) status with a [**current IRS determination letter**](http://501c3go.com/irs/need-copy-of-501c3-letter/)**.** The Council will not consider applications submitted by agencies that do not meet eligibility to apply for funding.

Private non-profit and for-profit applicants must be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to conduct business in North Carolina, or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents (see [www.sosnc.gov/corporations](http://www.sosnc.gov/corporations)).

**II. ABOUT NCCDD**

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD), authorized under Public Law 106-402, the DD Act, is one of 56 entities of its type in the United States and the territories. The NCCDD is an independent agency located in the NC DHHS. Its activities are governed by a 40-member body, appointed by the Governor, and comprised of at least 60 percent people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. Other members include legislators and policymakers representing various agencies and organizations having a vested interest in people with I/DD. The Council’s quarterly meetings are open to the public.

The mission of the NCCDD is to assure that individuals with I/DD and their families participate in the design of and have access to culturally competent services, supports, and other assistance and opportunities that promote independence, contribution, self-determination, integration and inclusion in the community. The NCCDD achieves this mission by promoting advocacy and leadership, community capacity building and systems change activities. It also serves in an advisory capacity, under state law, to the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The NCCDD has established goals and objectives in its Five-Year Plan (2017-2021). These goals represent the most pressing needs as identified by stakeholders in North Carolina. These goals are approved by the Council as the framework for its work within the context of the Five-Year Plan.

GOAL 1: By 2021, increase financial security through asset development for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

GOAL 2: By 2021, increase community living for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

GOAL 3: By 2021, increase advocacy for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

This RFA will address **Goal 1**.

For further information on the work of the NCCDD, please see the NCCDD Five-Year State Plan at our website by clicking <https://nccdd.org/the-council/five-year-plan.html>

**III. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

***INTENT:***

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) has a long history of exploring and supporting efforts to expand the range of employment choices for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD). The Council recognizes the importance of the goals outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), as well as the North Carolina Unified State Plan which outlines a roadmap for North Carolina accomplishing the mandates outlined in WIOA.

This RFA will focus on providing technical assistance, coordination, and other support for the efforts of the Unified State Plan Committee using a *Collective Impact* approach to increase the percentage of positive employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD and other disabilities.

The successful contractor will focus on supporting current efforts of the Community College System, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Health and Human Services in aligning their joint employment support and capacity development efforts. The intention is to provide input that is specific to the needs of self-advocates and the business community as the state attempts to accomplish the goals laid out in the North Carolina Unified State Plan. These goals include: 1. Creating an integrated, seamless and customer centered workforce system 2. Creation of workforce system that is responsive to the changing needs of the economy 3. Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy and continuously improve their skills, and 4. Use of data driven strategies and ensure accountability.

As part of this effort the Council supports the formation of regional Business Advisory Councils (BACs), to support the efforts of the state’s various prosperity zone committee members. As such, the contractor will be responsible for identifying members for the BACs and outlining efforts to advise the three state departments as they collaborate and engage to accomplish the goals laid out in the Unified State Plan. Specifically, the contractor will facilitate collaborative efforts to ensure that Unified State Plan Committee members focus on areas of the Unified State Plan that will have a significant impact on competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals living with I/DD and other disabilities. There are many areas of the Unified State Plan that have strong potential to change the landscape for all people living with disabilities by fostering alternatives to career training, coordination of services among participating agencies, expanding career centers, and increased partnership between the Department of Commerce, the Department of Health Human Services, the Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Community College System. All these areas will address the unemployment and under-employment rates for individuals with I/DD and other disabilities in North Carolina.

***BACKGROUND:***

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2016, North Carolina’s percentage of working age people who are currently employed is 72.8% for people without disabilities as compared to 27.7% for people with disabilities. Moreover, data gathered and tracked by North Carolina’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) show that the gap noted above consistently persists even though 40% of North Carolina’s businesses report that they cannot find talent to meet their workforce needs, this suggests that North Carolina’s population of individuals living with disabilities represents an untapped resource for employers. Recent data collected by job placements, by category, show that in fiscal year 2016, DVRS placed 4,219 individuals in the healthcare, hospitality and personal service fields; 1,729 in transportation, manufacturing and construction; and 546 individuals in business and professional services. Reports from self-advocates and families indicate a consistent information gap pertaining to easily understood and readily accessible employment services and related supports information. These experiences are supported by previous NCCDD initiatives which found that information regarding employment services and supports for individuals living with I/DD is often siloed, varies according to locale, and can be dependent on the level of experience of the employment related service and supports professionals involved (Thomas and Flippo, 2015).

Given these factors, it is evident that we still have much to do to accomplish our goal of increasing employment outcomes for individuals living with I/DD. While there is much to do, there is a recognized commitment by Governor Roy Cooper and his administration to place increased emphasis on positive employment outcomes in North Carolina. Moreover, outreach and public awareness efforts by state leadership is leading to an increased emphasis on accomplishing the mandates of WIOA as outlined in our North Carolina Unified State Plan. This RFA intends to leverage the current environment to continue efforts toward *Employment First* in NC, through collaborative partnerships charged with various responsibilities in the North Carolina Unified State Plan.

The Role of Collaboration:

Collaboration has been widely used in public and private sectors as an effective way to form solutions to complex challenges to reach a desired outcome that organizations could not achieve alone. There is not a strict definition of collaboration, however professional literature defines it as being on a continuum, going from the lowest level of cooperating comprised of exchanging information, to the highest level of collaborating by pursuing common goals through integrated strategies (Gadja, 2015). Regarding employment for people living with disabilities, best practices exist for road mapping collaborative efforts among stake holders, Henry et. al., (2015) outlining the progression from cooperative activities to more organized collaborative efforts by partners who

share a common agenda. They explain that on the cooperation side of the spectrum, building partnership is the focus for partners. That partnership is accomplished by:

* Establishing a plan with a mission, vision, goals, and strategies
* Defining roles and responsibilities of leaders and members
* Building trust and developing effective communication processes
* Defining indicators for success (Henry et. al., 2015)

Our Recent Collaborative Efforts:

Over the last decade in North Carolina, there have been federal and state level collaborations among various Divisions to raise awareness, and address the systemic barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals living with I/DD and other disabilities. A 2013 report released by the State Employment Leadership Network, entitled “A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities”, outlined many recommendations that provided direction and guidance for state governments for joining their efforts with business partners to promote hiring of people living with I/DD and other disabilities, in both private and public sectors. The SELN is a federal collaboration designed to be a roadmap for state governors and leaders to use as they strategize their efforts to address employment disparities for people living with disabilities. Regarding recent state level collaborations designed to increase engagement between state leadership and employment partners across the state, in 2017 technical assistance was brought in from United States’ Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy to assist multiple state divisions, including the Division of Medical Assistance, the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to support their efforts in realigning their respective employment service definitions, as well as inform policy for best employment services practices for employment service personnel.

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities has also supported various initiatives and demonstration projects that have addressed or examined various barriers to employment for individuals living with I/DD and other disabilities. In 2012, the “Reaching the Summit of Success Project” examined policies and best practices across the state to promote competitive integrated employment for youth living with I/DD. From this initiative came a series of recommendations available for state leadership to consider, in their efforts toward advancing employment opportunities for individuals living with I/DD and other disabilities. Most recently, the Council partnered with the NCWorks Commission, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the North Carolina Business Leadership Network, and local stake-holders and business leaders for the “Everybody Works Campaign”. This public awareness campaign has highlighted the untapped pool of talent, people living with disabilities represent throughout the state, as well as drawn statewide attention to the benefits for local businesses when their workforce reflects the diversity in their respective communities.

This RFA represents another step forward in promoting system change efforts to increase employment rates for the IDD community and other individuals living with disabilities, while supporting state leadership in their efforts to accomplish the goals of the Unified State Plan. This collaborative is also intended to continue to encourage North Carolina becoming an Employment First State. As such the successful contractor will be responsible for accomplishing the following through a Collective Impact framework:

***DELIVERABLES:***

1. Provide support for facilitating a common agenda, vision and mission alignment for the regional Business Advisory Council’s (BAC’s) members as they provide input to regional Prosperity Zone committee members.
2. Identify and address current information gaps for people living with disabilities, as it pertains to employment and their knowledge and awareness of employment related services and supports as a baseline for shared measurement for system improvements, collaboration, and access to information for employment stakeholders.
3. Address system navigation challenges, and siloed information to eliminate the “wrong door” experience for self-advocates and their families
4. Examine how to address the specific needs and unique challenges of citizens in rural areas from both an employer and self-advocate perspective.
5. Examine tools for measuring and tracking success for community based, competitive, integrated employment for individuals living with disabilities, including those living with I/DD.
6. Explore the potential of developing interagency agreements for what constitutes accurate data collection across multiple state agencies that provide employment related services and supports to measure this initiative’s potential impact.
7. Identify and recruit business community leaders that are champions for employment opportunities for all North Carolina citizens to participate in this initiative.
8. Conduct a review of current progress made in accomplishing goals of the North Carolina Unified State Plan as it relates to employment for individuals living with I/DD and other disabilities.
9. Identify areas in the North Carolina Unified State Plan in which guidelines could be strengthened as it pertains to individuals living with I/DD.
10. Provide a report each year summarizing outcomes of this initiative.

***CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES:***

The applicant selected for the initiative will be expected to establish and operationalize activities that facilitate the initiative’s established goals, outlined in Section III.

Also, the applicant selected for the initiative will be expected to establish and operationalize activities to facilitate outreach to and inclusion of the Hispanic/Latino I/DD community. The 2017-2021 state plans of Councils on Developmental Disabilities must identify disparity among a subpopulation of the state’s I/DD community and address that disparity. The NCCDD identified a barrier to services and supports for the Hispanic/Latino community caused by language access issues in response to the Administration on Community Living’s (ACL) mandate. Outreach to, and collaboration with, the Hispanic/Latino community to increase engagement and involvement is the Council’s proposed intent.

In addition, the Council has identified **Collective Impact** as the model to be used during the 2017-2021 Five-Year Plan to develop, implement, and evaluate initiatives to produce systems change; therefore, the applicant selected for the initiative will be expected to operationalize activities to facilitate the five essential elements to a Collective Impact project, including:

1. Common Agenda:

All participants **share a vision for change** that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed upon actions.

1. Shared Measurement:

All participating organizations **agree on the ways success will be measured and reported**, with a short list of common indicators identified and used for learning and improvement.

1. Mutually Reinforcing Activities:

A diverse set of stakeholders, typically across sectors, coordinate a set of differentiated activities through a **mutually reinforcing plan of action**.

1. Continuous Communication:

All players engage in **frequent and structured open communication** to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

1. Backbone Support:

An **independent, funded staff dedicated to the initiative** provides ongoing support by guiding the initiative’s vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing resources.

Examples of when communities are ready or near-ready for Collective Impact:

* There is a “champion” for this cause who has the ability to engage and encourage multiple sectors in the community and is willing to use that ability to help the community solve this problem;
* There is some local funding available to begin this effort or in-kind resources (protected time for selected staff members) to begin working to obtain funding;
* There is a history of other kinds of successful collaboration in the community among at least some of the relevant stakeholders;
* The general public is aware of this problem and cares about it, or can be readily made aware and will care if they are aware.

***Priority will be given to organizations that can demonstrate:***

* Knowledge of evidence base and evidence informed employment service practices for individuals living with I/DD and other disabilities
* Knowledge of multiple partner engagement and facilitation to accomplish common agenda goals
* Prior experience in the promoting and/or conducting research on competitive integrated employment for people living with I/DD or other disabilities
* Clear evidence of the agency’s capacity to carry out the proposed initiative
* Evidence of a history of providing related services that are demonstrated to be person-centered.
* Documentation of collaborative relationships in the I/DD field. This should include letters of commitment from partnering organizations and other collaborating agencies.
* That their work and the response in the RFA demonstrates a clear understanding of the Collective Impact model of system change.

The funding for this RFA will be up to **$100,000** per year with required minimum of 25% non-federal matching funds (minimum of **$33,334**), for up to three years, with Year 1 beginning **October 1, 2018** and ending **September 30, 2019**. Within these parameters, an applicant shall propose a three-year work plan clearly identifying the outputs and outcomes for each year. **The Year 1 budget is the only budget to be entered into the DD Suite application.** Continuation of funding after each funded year depends on contractor’s performance, Council approval, and continued funding from the United States Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Upon approval for continuation funding, the scope of work for upcoming year will be jointly reviewed and revised by the NCCDD staff and contractor 90 days prior to the start of the upcoming year.

Definition of a Developmental Disability

Per the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments of 2000, section 102(8), “The term 'developmental disability' means a severe, chronic disability of an individual that:

* is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments;
* is manifested before the individual attains age 22;
* is likely to continue indefinitely;
* results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity;

(i) Self-care;

(ii) Receptive and expressive language;

(iii) Learning;

(iv) Mobility;

(v) Self-direction;

(vi) Capacity for independent living;

(vii) Economic self-sufficiency; and

reflects the individual’s need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.”

# IV. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Applications are welcomed from any university, non-profit, for-profit or government agency that demonstrates that their agency is qualified, responsible, and capable of conducting the activities described. Eligible entities include any organizations, agencies, or businesses demonstrating an expertise in the focus area of this initiative. To be eligible, non-profit private entities must submit proof of current 501(c)3 status with a current IRS determination letter dated in the current year. The Council will not consider applications submitted by agencies that do not meet eligibility to apply for funding.

Non-profit applicants must be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to conduct business in North Carolina, or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents

(see [www.sosnc.gov/corporations](http://www.sosnc.gov/corporations)).

# *USE OF FUNDS:*

Contract funds may be used to support personnel services, operating expenses, and contracted services. Funds must be budgeted in the categories listed in the line item budget. Applicants must develop a budget narrative to accompany the line item budget. The line item budget and the budget narrative must show a clear relationship between the proposed budget and the proposed activities stated in the initiative plan**.**

# Funds may not support efforts to engage in any political activities or lobbying.

***PERFORMANCE MONITORING/QUALITY ASSURANCE:***

To meet the requirements of the initiative, the contractor must collaborate with NCCDD staff to:

* participate in trainings and meetings;
* participate in initiative evaluation;
* participate in the NCCDD federally mandated Periodic Performance Review and;
* participate in other activities identified or conducted by NCCDD.

Performance and quality assurance of this contract will be conducted as follows:

* NCCDD will conduct monitoring activities during each contract period and will utilize the contractor’s objectives as its assurance criteria for meeting outcomes.
* The contractor must submit a quarterly progress report through DD Suite and a monthly expenditure report to NCCDD.
* The contractor must submit an Annual Performance Measure Summary form.
* The contractor must submit an End of Year Progress Report.
* The contractor must be available to present at the quarterly NCCDD meetings.

**V. APPLICATION PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND APPLICATION REVIEW**

The following is a general description of the process by which applicants will be selected for funding for this initiative.

* 1. RFA announcements are sent to prospective agencies and organizations, via email, and/or posted on the NCCDD website, the DHHS website, and the NCCDD social media pages.
  2. Written questions concerning the specifications in this RFA will be received until **May 25, 2018** via [email](mailto:RFAinfo@nccdd.org?subject=mailto:RFAinfo@nccdd.org?subject=RFA%20Question%20-%20%20INITIATIVE%20NAME%20RFA) at [RFAinfo@nccdd.org.](mailto:RFAinfo@nccdd.org) A summary of all questions and answers will be posted on the NCCDD website (www.nccdd.org) and DD Suite within 5 business days after the Bidders’ Workshop on **May 30, 2018** and e-mailed to all agencies and organizations completing the Intent to Apply Form.
  3. Applications are due by 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time on **June 20, 2018**. Electronic submission is required, except as otherwise noted. Complete application and attach/upload all necessary documents in DD Suite before submitting. The complete RFA package and instructions are available through the DD Suite electronic submission program (ddsuite.org/).
  4. Applications will be evaluated by an RFA Review Committee. The recommendations of this committee will be reviewed by the NCCDD, which reserves the right to accept or reject the Review Committee’s recommendations.
  5. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a Request for Applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.
  6. Application Process Dates Summary:
     + **May 14, 2018**: Request for applications distributed to eligible applicants and posted on the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities website ([www.nccdd.org](http://www.nccdd.org)).
     + **May 25, 2018**: Deadline for written RFA questions.
     + **May 30, 2018**: Interested applicants may attend a Bidders’ Workshop. If feasible, NCCDD may schedule an additional Bidders’ Workshop at a date and location to be determined. Check [www.nccdd.org](http://www.nccdd.org) for announcements.
     + **June 20, 2018**: Applications due to the NCCDD by close of business, 5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time.
     + **August 10, 2018**: Award announced.
     + **October 1, 2018:** Contract begins.

**VI. ATTACHMENTS TO BE COMPLETED UPON AWARD**

See DD Suite to download these attachments - all of these documents must be completed if your agency is awarded the contract for this RFA prior to the execution of the contract:

* Project Profile page
* NCCDD Assurances
* Notice of Certain Reporting and Audit Requirements
* Conflict of Interest Policy/Letter (Contractor’s COI)
* Conflict of Interest Verification – Annual
* Indirect Cost Rate Letter – if applicable
* 501(c)(3) Status Determination Letter/Form (private non-profit agencies) (Note: Public organizations shall submit a document verifying their legal name and tax identification number.)
* IRS Tax Letter
* Annual IRS Tax Exemption Verification Form (private non-profit agencies)
* State Certifications
* Federal Certifications
* DUNS Letter
* Completed Letter to Identify Individual to Sign Contracts
* Completed Letter to Identify Individual to Sign Expenditure Reports
* Certification of No Overdue Taxes (applies to non-governmental entities)
* Proof of Insurance, if applicable

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit the attachments along with their application. If attachments are not submitted and the applicant is selected to receive the funding for this initiative, the attachments must be completed and

submitted with the contract. The NCCDD will not execute a contract until it is in receipt of all attachments. Failure to provide these timely may result in disqualification for funding.

References:

Gadja, R. (2004). Utilizing collaboration theory to evaluate strategic alliances. American Journal of Evaluation, 25, 65-77.

Henry, A. D., Lansko, A., Nicholson, J. (2015). What does it take to build an employment collaborative for people with disabilities? Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 43, 1-15.

North Carolina Legislature Research Commission Special Report (2017). Report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services retrieved April 11, 2018 from https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/SL%202015-241%20sec.%2011.19%28a%29%20Education%20Opportunties%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities\_.pdf

Thomas, C. and Flippo, K. (2015). Creating Productive Futures for Youth and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts. Retrieved November 12, 2017 from <http://www.communityinclusion.org/rss/nc.pdf>

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan (2016). Special Report retrieved April 11, 2018 from <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/NC%20WIOA%20Unified%20Plan%208.30.16.pdf>

U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017, June 21). Table 5 Persons not in the labor force by disability status, age, and sex, 2016 annual averages Retrieved December 4, 2017, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.t05.htm>

U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017, June 21). Table 3 Employed persons by disability status, occupation, and sex, 2016 annual average retrieved December 4, 2017, from https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.t03.htm