

2016 -2107 AEBG Request for Proposal

Program Name:

Passport to Public Service in Paradise

1. Executive Summary

In response to community needs for jobs and the County of Santa Barbara's increasing need for skilled workers, an ongoing local outreach, assessment and training program would create a vital pathway to public service employment that might otherwise go unexplored, through delivery of a "3 x 3" training program; three targeted populations x three competency areas. The educational component would be provided to program participants through an integrated partnership between the Career Skills Institute (CSI) at Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) and the County of Santa Barbara Employees' University and other community organizations with pertinent training capacity. This proposal is "The Passport to Public Service in Paradise Program."

The Santa Barbara Consortium Regional Comprehensive Plan (March 1, 2015) cited an Economic and Workforce Information Analysis (2013) that identified three occupational wage tiers in south Santa Barbara County, with a stated need for jobs that allow movement from Tier 3 to higher Tier 2 wages. The need for stable jobs at the Tier 2 wage level in the Santa Barbara area is critical for many citizens. The need for upward mobility in career paths at the County is equally pressing. The goal is to create a talent pipeline enhanced by the synergy gained through community collaboration. This pipeline, through education and development of employability skills will provide additional external pathways into the County organization, while providing internal pathways upward in the organization. This program amplifies the County's ability to hire, engage, and retain local citizens positively impacting the area economy.

The County of Santa Barbara Employees' University, in association with SBCC's Career Skills Institute, will deliver training and explore collaborative opportunities with other community programs (such as the Workforce Resource Center, those programs serving adults with disabilities and older adults) in order to generate authentic access to public service jobs and ensure upward mobility through education.

The County programming will target three critical groups;

- Vulnerable populations who are unemployed or underemployed
 - SBCC students who may need workplace experience and business exposure in order to become employable
- and
- Current County employees in entry level positions who need support to advance in their career and will provide each group the specific training it requires in order to become employable, employed or promoted within the County organization.

By stimulating and supporting existing entry level employees to move upward, this innovative, synergistic approach provides citizens with access to sustainable, fulfilling and well compensated opportunities by creating the space (or openings) required for hiring new talent. This is the movement, or "churn" required to ensure a healthy, growing organization by providing staff with ongoing skill development that leads to improved wages, financial security and a vital community.

Much as the energy from a tornado creates a vacuum that draws things in and up, this program endeavors to create a current that will attract dedicated, loyal and talented employees who might never have considered public service, while providing stable, careers with employer paid benefits tied to Tier 2 wages. For current employees, it provides the attention and growth opportunities that Gallup research indicates are necessary for loyal and fully engaged employees.

Due to civil service and merit system processes, for some job seekers, it may seem too complex, mysterious and daunting to pursue public employment. These perceptions can impact the County's ability to attract the most diverse and qualified applicant pool. Similarly, public

perception and unflattering stereotypes of “government workers” is a barrier that can prevent application from those who want to take pride in their work. Few people outside the public sector understand how gratifying public service can be.

If implemented, this proposal would remove the actual and perceived barriers to public sector employment such as:

- Confusing application procedures
- Unfamiliar civil service terminology
- Fear of testing
- Unclear merit system processes
- Unfavorable images of public servants
- Negative bias about the quality of public sector work

In addition to breaking down those barriers to public employment, sharing the satisfaction of challenging, but meaningful work in the public interest is the intention behind the “Passport to Public Service in Paradise.” The dictionary defines the word “passport” as authorization or permission to travel or access. It is the images of open doors, travel, progress and new experiences that best depict the goals of this program.

The educational component would focus on building aptitude and proficiency in three specific competency areas;

- Communication Skills (e.g. ESL, survival Spanish, basic English grammar, basic writing, basic math, speaking to influence others, cultural differences in communication, active listening, reading and understanding business communication)
- Job Skills (e.g. basic keyboarding, computer literacy, internet use, email, building good work habits, getting along with co-workers, conflict resolution, being a productive team member, outstanding customer service, becoming a public servant, County values in public service, business of local government)
- Career Skills (e.g. what is a merit system?, do I want to work in civil service?, tracking County job opportunities, preparing a winning County job application, dressing for success, marketing your skills, job test prep, interview prep, tracking personal achievements, panel interviewing skills, exploring opportunities and creating my career path, county job mapping, On the Job Training (OJT) experience, setting and achieving goals)

(See Exhibit A for a list illustrating how an EU/CSI course delivery alliance would complement and reinforce learning.)

Based on individual assessment, each participant will have a personal “Learning Blueprint” crafted to meet their specific needs and objectives within their population. Each blueprint (or course and learning plan) will map to the level of the seven program outcomes listed below that is most appropriate to the individual’s needs.

Each individual’s objective will be tied to the participant’s initial level of preparation for employment or promotion, appetite for learning and growth, as well as capacity for addressing challenges. So, for some candidates, their primary initial objective may be to simply improve their skill set to the point where they can meet minimum qualifications. For another candidate, his/her objective may be to receive a job offer.

The process of creating the Learning Blueprint can and should be a collaborative process, using input from candidates, their advocates, existing community support agencies and County staff. Program outcomes are tied to the merit system recruitment process and will be tiered to the assessed skills of the candidate upon entry to the program, with an overall goal of preparing candidates to competitively test for entry level positions (external candidates) or promotional opportunities (internal candidates) with the County, in the priority order of achievement that follows:

1. Meet minimum qualifications/employment standards for specific jobs (successfully establish eligibility)
2. Take and pass a Civil Service Exam for an open position
3. Achieve placement on a certified eligibility list
4. Be called to interview

5. Accept an entry level job offer with the County or for those in entry level jobs, a higher level position
6. Successfully pass a one year probation period
7. Remain employed for two years

2. Integration

The Passport to Public Service in Paradise Program is designed to identify and fill the gaps in skill, knowledge and attitudes that prevent employees and citizens from advancing professionally. By utilizing existing community training programs (via SBCC), connecting with County internal training through the Employees' University, and making contacts with County departments and functional areas, program participants will be exposed to pertinent content in two, very different settings: an academic environment, and a business/workplace environment. These environments can be intimidating, and without this type of dual exposure, many candidates might never pursue careers in the public sector. Beyond the actual content of the skill training, this approach will lead to confidence and poise in the very environments that hold the key to success for unemployed or underemployed citizens.

The stated mission of this program is to offer a portal to public service supported by two means. First, candidates will receive relevant, job specific training for targeted positions. Second, candidates will learn about the inner processes of County recruiting, testing, interviewing and hiring, along with how to access and understand County job postings. This training and access is tied to specific stable jobs with employer paid benefits and Tier 2 wages at the entry level, as well as unlimited potential for growth. (See Exhibit B, Representative Career Ladder, Eligibility Worker Series.) This is a deeply practical means of facilitating transitions to the workforce.

3. Justification

Data from the California, Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division showed an unemployment rate in Santa Barbara County of 4.9% in June of 2016, up from a revised 3.9 % in May, and unchanged from the year-ago estimate of 4.9%. In contrast, in this county the percentage of people aged 18 to 64 that are Below Poverty Level, is 17%, even higher for people of color, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau through research by the American Community Survey, representing the most recent 5 year estimate. This is a clear indication of the need for more stable and better paying jobs.

The County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors launched the Poverty Initiative in January, 2012 to provide insight into poverty in the County. The resulting report, "Snapshot of Poverty in Santa Barbara County", issued in September, 2013 illustrated the high cost of living in this area, as follows;

According to the most recent Self-Sufficiency Standard for Santa Barbara County, a single parent with a preschooler and a school-age child needs nearly \$60,000 a year – equivalent to more than three full-time minimum wage jobs – to cover their basic expenses. A single adult with no children needs \$13,220 or \$27,912 annually.

As the County's third largest employer, the County of Santa Barbara can dramatically impact the employment rate and economic health of the community, but attracting and retaining skilled employees is challenging. Over the next year, the County expects to fill approximately 350 positions, but lose 393 to attrition. This is a 10% lag in meeting the organization's employment needs. More disturbing, the County loses 22% of new hires within the first year due to voluntary and involuntary separations. Data also shows that 22% of those voluntarily leaving the County's employment do so to take a new job.

Other stressors on recruitment and retention are the intense generational shifts taking place. The County faces the imminent departure of "Baby Boomer" employees, with a staggering 45% eligible to retire within the next 3 to 5 years. Add to this the dramatic differences between Boomers and Millennials, the next biggest generation. Research indicates that unlike Traditionalists and Boomers, Millennials have a much more truncated and diverse service record,

with differing job priorities.

In addition to this data, informal discussions with leaders of community programs focused on job placement of their clients, proves a general lack of clarity around County recruitment methods, application and testing procedures, and civil service guidelines. The County is seen as a wealth of job opportunity, shrouded in complex and mysterious processes.

These facts illustrate the need for innovative and unconventional approaches to recruitment, training, and retention to attract and retain employees in stable career positions, in the public sector. The scope of this program covers the knowledge, skills, and attitudes identified as necessary to eliminate fear of, and bias against, public sector employment as well as to provide the encouragement, development, learning and upward mobility identified by Gallup as necessary for effective engagement (and therefore retention) of employees. The specific jobs targeted by this proposal are entry level jobs with clear paths to promotion, that represent over one quarter (1/4) of the total County employee base with an average turnover of more than 8% over the past 2 years.

Furthermore, the entry level wages for the positions targeted by this Passport program are all above the average for Tier 3 wages, as defined by the Economic and Workforce Information Analysis commissioned by the Workforce Investment Board, and in support of the Consortium's goal of moving participants "along a delineated career path, thus increasing their education and allowing them to move from Tier 3 to Tier 2 wages." (See wages on Exhibit B, Representative Career Ladder, Eligibility Worker Series.)

4. Outreach & Marketing

Both internal and external outreach and marketing will be employed, using;

- Job Fairs
- County Web Pages
- Posters and Flyers
- Informational Sessions
- Public Service Announcements (PSA's)
- Community Events
- Professional Organizations
- Community Based Organizations

Internally, we will target employees in identified entry level positions, who exhibit potential for advancement (based on program recruitment criteria), as well as supervisors who may nominate potential candidates. Externally, we will collaborate with SBCC and Workforce Resource Centers, et. al. to reach our target audience.

Outreach efforts will explain the program in detail with a description of the structured application and acceptance process which will be used to determine those candidates most likely to benefit from the program and achieve employment or promotion. (It is anticipated that even those applicants who are not "accepted" initially will be directed to resources that will prepare them for acceptance for the next iteration of the program.) Further information will clarify that assessment and testing will be used to establish a baseline of individual skills for accepted candidates in order to determine program placement, assist with formulation of individual learning blueprints, as well as tracking and measuring of individual progress.

In addition, appropriate candidates who are under-resourced will be directed to related support through other County departments or community based organizations, for transportation, childcare, etc. in order to facilitate their participation and path to self-sufficiency.

Marketing efforts will also focus on explaining position related "career ladders" (such as Exhibit B attached), and job descriptions, so participants can see a clear path forward with specific, achievable steps.

5. Alignment

In support of the Santa Barbara AEBG Consortium's vision to use "data-driven decision-making", County employee turnover statistics and local unemployment rates illuminate the need for fresh approaches to attracting and retaining talent. In addition, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors report, "Snapshot of Poverty in Santa Barbara County" clearly establishes the high cost of living and need for jobs with livable wages in this area.

The Passport to Public Service in Paradise Program is by its very nature, "inclusive", (aimed at unemployed, students and entry-level employees) "collaborative", (spring boarding from existing local programs) and "coordinated" (bringing multiple resources together for a coherent whole). This is a new program that integrates the benefits of existing programs with a unique process that creates value for all.

In support of the Consortium's mission to "provide excellence in adult educational programming", the County of Santa Barbara's Employees' University has established and maintained high standards for professional adult educational programming. This has been necessary to satisfy the ongoing training and development needs for the large (4,000 employees), complex (23 departments) County organization, and promote the long term career success of its employees.

In support of the Consortium's goals and objectives; The Passport to Public Service will specifically focus on the following Consortium goals;

Goal 1 - Provide recognized professional enrichment training to 3 populations of candidates, in 3 identified, broad skill categories.

Goal 2 - Assist students in bridging academic knowledge and business experience through assessment, job exposure and training.

Goal 4 - Assess and monitor outcomes (as listed above) by population, for a two year period, in terms of sheer numbers and also by number of placements/promotions as well as an estimate of economic impact on the community.