

# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**An Invitation to Submit A Proposal for Technical Assistance**

## ***TRANSITIONAL JOBS PROJECT: Taking Leadership to Address Barriers to Employment***

**Bidders' conference call: February 22, 2005**

**PROPOSAL DUE: March 15, 2005**

**DATES OF PROJECT: May 2005 – November 2006**



**National League of Cities**

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## I. Goal

To assist municipal leaders or community organizations who are interested in establishing high-quality Transitional Jobs programs to help hard-to-employ residents overcome barriers to work and obtain steady employment.

## II. Project Overview: Technical Assistance Opportunities for Communities to Develop Transitional Jobs Programs

The National League of Cities' (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) and the National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN) invite cities, counties, states, community development corporations (CDCs), and/or nonprofit organizations to apply as the lead entity for an intensive, 18-month technical assistance effort. Only entities operating within a city or other defined region with a population in excess of 50,000 can apply to participate in the *Transitional Jobs Project: Taking Leadership to Address Barriers to Employment*.

The purpose of this project is to assist policymakers and program administrators who are interested in establishing Transitional Jobs programs as a way to help hard-to-employ individuals gain work experience and secure permanent jobs with family-supporting wages.

The project will help leaders determine the best program model for their community and ensure that programs are designed in compliance with federal regulations. The project will also help selected entities explore federal and state funding options for the establishment of local Transitional Jobs programs.

The National Transitional Jobs Network and its partners, the Transitional Work Corporation (TWC), the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), and NLC's YEF Institute will bring a wealth of expertise on the design and implementation of Transitional Jobs programs:

- **National Transitional Jobs Network** – This dynamic network of over 60 existing city and state Transitional Jobs programs fosters economic opportunity for America's workers by promoting the creation of new Transitional Jobs (TJ) programs, building the capacity of existing TJ programs, and advancing a national dialogue on job advancement strategies. Network staff maintain the network's website ([www.transitionaljobs.net](http://www.transitionaljobs.net)), provide research and technical assistance to network members, and provide opportunities for cross-site sharing. The Network is currently housed at Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights in Chicago, Illinois.
- **Transitional Work Corporation** – Founded in 1998 in Philadelphia, the Transitional Work Corporation uses city, state and private foundation funding to operate a model Transitional Jobs program for 2,000 city residents annually. TWC has also consulted with other sites interested in launching similar programs, providing technical support during the design and early implementation phases.

- **Center for Employment Opportunities** – The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) provides immediate, comprehensive and balanced transitional employment and employment services to over 2,000 ex-inmates in New York City annually. Founded as two parallel demonstration projects of the Vera Institute of Justice in 1979, CEO has operated work crews providing indoor-outdoor maintenance and repair to New York City’s government agencies for over twenty-five years. Recently CEO has begun providing technical assistance to other jurisdictions interested in using their TJ model to address the challenges posed by their ex-inmate populations.
- **NLC’s YEF Institute** – The YEF Institute was launched in January 2000 as a special place within NLC to strengthen the capacity of municipal leaders to enhance the lives of children, youth, and families. The Executive Director of the YEF Institute is a national expert on Transitional Jobs programs, having written extensively on this model and worked with cities across the country in the development of local programs. The Institute conducted a two-year technical assistance project on Transitional Jobs with ten cities from 2002-2004.

The National Transitional Jobs Network and its partners will work directly with teams from each selected entity via conference calls and site visits to assist them as they develop and implement Transitional Jobs programs. Representatives from all local teams will also meet on one or two occasions and participate in group conference calls during the project period to promote cross-site exchanges of information and lessons learned. The NTJN will structure opportunities for sharing of information, insights, and strategies for implementation among selected sites to highlight the full range of ways in which Transitional Jobs can lead to permanent, high-quality employment.

This request for proposals describes the potential benefits to cities, counties, or other eligible entities in this technical assistance project. It also specifies the process that interested applicants should follow in preparing and submitting applications to participate.

## **Background on Transitional Jobs Programs**

Since 1997, more than 35 cities and four states (WA, PA, GA, and MN) have established over 200 *Transitional Jobs programs*. Transitional Jobs are an effective tool to increase the employment and earnings of individuals who have been unable to find stable, unsubsidized employment. TJ programs provide time-limited, wage-paying jobs combined with skill development activities and related support services. These programs are funded through various combinations of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Community Service Block Grants (CSBG), Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET), Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative (SVORI), and HOPE VI Public Housing funding; publicly bid contracts and other local (county and municipal) publicly bid work contracts; as well as earned income/fee for service.

Currently, unemployment rates are rising, increasing numbers of people with criminal records who are returning to their communities without jobs, and welfare recipients are reaching federal or state time limits on eligibility for cash assistance. In this environment, TJ programs give cities a much-needed way to create paid work and additional skill development opportunities for hard-to-employ individuals while also strengthening the local economy.

### ***Common design features:***

- Transitional Jobs offer temporary, wage-paying jobs for 20 to 35 hours per week.
- Work placements are typically in public agencies or non-profit organizations, although some programs subsidize placements in private, for-profit companies.
- Programs offer access to job readiness, basic education, vocational skills, and supportive services based on individualized employment plans.
- Programs offer assistance in finding an unsubsidized job.

***Serving Hard-to-Employ Individuals:*** Participants in Transitional Jobs programs are people with multiple challenges to successful employment who are unable to find or retain work in the regular labor market, despite the participation in job placement programs. Transitional Jobs programs serve many hard-to-employ populations, including those who have little or no work history, limited education, non-disabling health problems, limited English skills, or a criminal record, among others. Despite these challenges, these programs typically place 50-75 percent of participants in unsubsidized employment within six to nine months of enrollment. Average wages at placement range from \$7 to \$10 per hour.

***Promoting Self-Sufficiency:*** Transitional Jobs help hard-to-employ individuals progress toward self-sufficiency by connecting people to the mainstream labor market. They combine meaningful work experience, hard and soft employment training skills, and supports to help remove barriers to work. Moreover, Transitional Jobs employees earn paychecks that increase self-confidence and allow employees to pay into Social Security and the unemployment system. Additionally, employees are qualified for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (up to approximately \$4,000 a year) and other income supports for workers, including unemployment insurance.

***Strengthening the Local Economy:*** Transitional Jobs can serve as a key component in building stronger communities. Transitional Jobs are generally in government or nonprofit agencies where participants contribute to important community services. At the same time, the increase in work opportunities for hard-to-employ individuals reduces the pressure on local emergency service systems and provides income that participating residents spend on local goods and services. Finally, local economic development efforts are bolstered by the overall improvement in the quality of the local workforce.

***Additional background information is available at [www.transitionaljobs.net/AboutTJ/AboutTJ.htm](http://www.transitionaljobs.net/AboutTJ/AboutTJ.htm).***

### **III. Benefits to Municipalities and Communities**

Municipalities and other entities selected to participate in the Transitional Jobs Project will be provided with the following benefits:

- Ongoing support and technical assistance from the National Transitional Jobs Network, the Transitional Work Corporation, and the Center for Employment Opportunities in developing and implementing a Transitional Jobs program that meets the needs of the local population and complies with federal, state, and local regulations;
- Guidance from NLC's YEF Institute on the roles that municipal leaders can play to promote Transitional Jobs, connections to peers in others cities that are implementing these programs, and assistance for non-municipal organizations on how to effectively engage city officials in Transitional Jobs efforts.
- Direct access to national experts in the areas of transitional employment, workforce development, criminal justice and reentry, TANF policy, youth services, and people who are hard to employ;
- Opportunities for cross-site sharing with other selected localities to promote exchanges of information and lessons learned through subsidized participation in the 2005 Annual Transitional Jobs Conference and group conference calls;
- Further opportunities to participate in the National Transitional Jobs Network, a growing national network of Transitional Jobs programs, policy makers, government officials, and local leaders working to promote the Transitional Jobs model; and
- Heightened national visibility associated with participation in a technical assistance initiative sponsored by the NLC, NTJN, TWC, and CEO and supported by prominent national foundations, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

### **IV. Project Description**

Technical assistance provided by the NTJN, TWC, CEO, and NLC's YEF Institute will assist municipalities and communities in developing and implementing effective Transitional Jobs programs to help low-income residents obtain and retain good jobs.

Following selection, the National Transitional Jobs Network and its partner organizations will assign a project liaison to individually contact each team to explore local priorities and opportunities and to initiate program development. The liaison and the team will work together to develop an action plan that will serve as a starting point and guide the site-specific technical assistance activities.

Throughout the 18-month technical assistance period, the project liaisons will work closely with teams to ensure that their action plans are periodically reviewed and successfully implemented. For example, project liaison will be prepared and available to:

- Provide site-specific “how-to” materials for Transitional Jobs program development in the context of relevant local and federal policies;
- Explore federal, state, and local funding opportunities for Transitional Jobs programs in a given site;
- Broker relationships with national experts and organizations; and
- Make connections to existing programs that can share best practices and innovative strategies.

The National Transitional Jobs Network will also coordinate a meeting of representatives from all of the participants in this project. **This meeting will be held at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Transitional Jobs Conference in Washington, D.C. on May 5-6, 2005.** NTJN will waive the conference fee and will reimburse travel-related expenses for two members of each team.

This meeting will be structured to allow focused discussion of major design and implementation challenges, link leaders to peers working on similar initiatives, and promote cross-site sharing of best practices, financing strategies, and opportunities to link state and local agencies.

The NLC will bring national visibility to selected entities, and the NTJN will draw attention to the work of grantees in new materials produced to highlight successful strategies and promising approaches to municipal and community leadership in Transitional Jobs programs. In addition, participating localities will have the opportunity to share their experiences in national and local forums, including conferences sponsored by the NTJN and other national organizations.

## V. Proposal Guidelines

Only entities operating within a city or geopolitical region with a population in excess of 50,000 or a consortium of smaller communities within a county or other defined region will be considered as sites for these intensive technical assistance initiatives. Preference in the final selection process will be given to teams that include city, county, or state officials.

In order to be considered for selection as an intensive technical assistance site in this project, cities must submit a proposal that includes the elements outlined below.

**A bidders' conference call will be held on Tuesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3:00 pm (EST)** to provide prospective applicants the opportunity to ask questions about the Transitional Jobs model and the application process prior to submitting proposals. Contact Laura Zusman, NTJN Coordinator, at [lzusman@heartlandalliance.org](mailto:lzusman@heartlandalliance.org) or 312-660-1345 to register for this call.

- *A proposal narrative, not to exceed five pages (single spaced, 12 point font) in length.* This narrative should address the following questions:
  - ✓ Why is the applicant interested in developing a Transitional Jobs program? What are the specific needs this program will meet for community residents? What population(s) will be served through the Transitional Jobs program? What are the current obstacles to successful employment for the population(s)?
  - ✓ What challenges or obstacles are likely to be encountered in designing or implementing a Transitional Jobs program? How would technical assistance from the National Transitional Jobs Network and its partners help overcome these challenges or obstacles?
  - ✓ How would a Transitional Jobs program fit into the community's larger vision for family economic security, workforce development, reentry initiatives and/or employment services for low-income residents?
  - ✓ To what extent do initiatives or commitments and investments exist that provide a foundation upon which this project could build?
  - ✓ What potential funding streams, if any, have already been identified?
- *A letter of support from a senior official acting as project sponsor.* The project sponsor could be a Mayor or City Manager, Governor, City Council President, County Board President, or other elected or senior appointed official in city, county, or state government. Additional letters from other senior officials are welcome.
- *Letter(s) of support from other key community stakeholders.* These letters should demonstrate the breadth and depth of the commitment to a partnership with local government in the areas of workforce development and a Transitional Jobs program in particular.

- *A list of proposed team members.* A project lead for the team should be designated. This project lead should either report directly to the public official serving as the project sponsor or serve as Executive Director of a CDC or nonprofit organization designated by the project sponsor. The project lead will communicate most often with the assigned project liaison.

Project teams should also include other stakeholders who can play key roles in efforts to establish Transitional Jobs programs. Examples of other stakeholders who might be considered as team members include:

- Senior officials from municipal, county, and/or state agencies involved in family economic security, workforce development, or welfare reform;
- Public and non-profit agencies willing to provide transitional work slots for participants or to act as contractors to manage elements of the Transitional Jobs program;
- Local employers, senior officials from area corporations, and representatives from the local Workforce Investment Board; and
- Leaders of community-based or faith-based organizations representing low-income residents who are identified by the team leader as a key partner.

The list of proposed team members should include each member's name, title, address, phone and fax numbers, e-mail address, and a sentence or two that explains the reason for each member's participation on the team. Please designate a lead contact and indicate if the two additional team members who would attend cross-site meetings are known at this point.

- *A letter of interest from a potential transitional work site and/or funding source.*
  - In our experience, one of the two most challenging aspects of operating a Transitional Jobs program is finding appropriate work sites for the transitional work to take place. TJ employers need to understand the design of the program, to recognize that TJ employees must be provided with real work, and to realize that on-site mentoring and case manager involvement are essential to success. A work arrangement between the Transitional Jobs program and the transitional work site can be funded privately by an employer, through a social enterprise, and/or by the government from a wide array of sources.
  - Funding is the other big challenge to operating a successful Transitional Jobs program. Widely used funding sources for subsidizing Transitional Jobs programs include TANF, WIA, Community Development Block Grants; Community Service Block Grants; FSET; Child Support; SVORI and other reentry funds; public housing Title 3; YouthBuild; child welfare; independent living; government temporary employee lines; and state, county, and fee-for-service/earned income models. Regional or community foundations may also be willing to support planning efforts and local pilot projects. While a letter of interest need not include a funding commitment, it should reflect a willingness on the part of the potential funder to explore the merits and potential difficulties associated with the development of a Transitional Jobs program in the community. In instances where such a letter is not included, the proposal should indicate how technical assistance provided as part of the project would help to secure future funding.

A useful resource is a document published by the National League of Cities entitled *Financing Transitional Jobs Programs: A Strategic Guide to Federal Funding Sources* and available at <http://www.nlc.org/content/Files/TransitionalJobs.pdf>.

- *A completed technical assistance application cover sheet (copy enclosed).*

## VI. Selection Criteria

Selection of cities for participation in the Transitional Jobs Project will be based on the following criteria:

- **Articulation of a clearly defined problem.** A successful application will describe the obstacles to success that local family economic security, community supervision, welfare-to-work, or workforce development programs are currently encountering as well as the team's thinking on how these challenges might be met through a Transitional Jobs program.
- **A vision of how technical assistance from the National Transitional Jobs Network and its partners can make a difference.** The proposal should provide a clear sense of how the city's goals and plans for the project will be advanced by the types of assistance that can be provided through this project.
- **High-level commitment.** During the application review process, the YEF Institute and its partners will look for compelling evidence that the relevant city, county, regional consortium, or state will dedicate the time, staff, and resources necessary to participate in and benefit from the project. A strong expression of intent from high ranking public officials to support and sustain a leadership role is a key expression of this commitment.
- **Breadth, depth, and influence of proposed team.** As with any new project, selection for participation in the Transitional Jobs Project is an investment in leadership. The composition of the team and the positions of the team leaders will be viewed as key reflections of the strength and likely effectiveness of partnerships forged to advance the goals of the project.
- **Interest and involvement of potential work sites and/or funding sources.** The willingness and ability to engage employers, Workforce Investment Boards, criminal justice coordinators/officials, administrators of other public programs, TANF administrators, or private foundation leaders as partners in the initiative is likely to play a major role in the long-term success of a Transitional Jobs program.

To the extent possible, the NTJN will seek to ensure that selected sites are drawn from various regions of the country and reflect substantial diversity with respect to the size and composition of their populations.

### **IMPORTANT APPLICATION INFORMATION**

**Please include the original application, including the application cover sheet, letters of support, list of team members, and the 5-page proposal, PLUS THREE (3) COPIES. No appendices beyond the required letters of support and team member list will be accepted.**

**Conference Call for  
Prospective Applicants: February 22, 2005, 3:00 pm (EST) - OPTIONAL**

**Proposals Due: March 15, 2005**

**Selection Announcement: April 1, 2005**

**Cross-Site Meeting  
for Selected Teams: May 5-6, 2005 in Washington, D.C.**

**Mailing Address: Laura Zusman  
National Transitional Jobs Network  
c/o Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights  
208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1818  
Chicago, IL 60604**

For questions about the application process, contact Laura Zusman at (312) 660-1345 or [lzusman@heartlandalliance.org](mailto:lzusman@heartlandalliance.org).

For questions about the National League of Cities' role and experiences of NLC member cities, contact Abby Hughes Holsclaw at (202) 626-3107 or [holsclaw@nlc.org](mailto:holsclaw@nlc.org).

For more information on the project partners, please visit their websites at:

NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families: [www.nlc.org/iyef](http://www.nlc.org/iyef)

Transitional Work Corporation: [www.transitionalwork.org](http://www.transitionalwork.org)

Center for Employment Opportunities: [www.ceoworks.org](http://www.ceoworks.org)

National Transitional Jobs Network: [www.transitionaljobs.net](http://www.transitionaljobs.net)



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION COVER SHEET

*Transitional Jobs Project: Taking Leadership to Address Barriers to Employment*

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Agency Applying: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Entity Applying:

\_\_\_\_ City    \_\_\_\_ County    \_\_\_\_ State    \_\_\_\_ CDC    \_\_\_\_ Nonprofit    \_\_\_\_ For profit

Project Lead and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF CITY, STATE, COUNTY, OR REGION

Population: \_\_\_\_\_ Median Family Income: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Poverty Rate: \_\_\_\_\_ Unemployment Rate: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Proposals Due:</b>	March 15, 2005
<b>Mailing Applications to:</b>	Laura Zusman National Transitional Jobs Network c/o Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights 208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 1818 Chicago, IL 60604