



1650 Lake Shore Drive, Suite 110,  
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**aspyrworkforce.org**

## **Request for Qualifications**

### **Purpose**

Aspyr is soliciting a qualified vendor to guide and help answer research questions on the use of Learning and Employment Records (LERs) and competency/skills-based hiring in Central Ohio. The vendor must demonstrate experience in survey/research design, conducting focus groups, data collection, visualization, and analysis.

### **Contact**

Kier Scott, Director, Policy and Research  
[rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org](mailto:rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org)  
614.437.8400

### **About Aspyr's Central Ohio Talent Network**

This project to understand the Central Ohio ecosystem is part of the broader SkillsFWD initiative, a national effort to accelerate the adoption of Learning and Employment Records (LERs) and skills-based hiring practices. SkillsFWD aims to transform how learners and workers access opportunities by enabling better signaling of skills, greater alignment with employer needs, and more equitable talent pathways. In Central Ohio, the initiative focuses on digital credentialing and employment pathways for students (K-12), particularly those from Columbus City Schools (CCS). Insights from this research will help inform the design of skills-first solutions that bridge education and employment.

**Project Overview:** <https://skills-fwd-landing-page.vercel.app/projects/central-ohio-talent-network>

### **Research Goals**

The selected vendor will collect and analyze data to inform CCS's strategies for improving career readiness programming. This research should explore the current workforce expectations and barriers from the employer's perspective, as well as the practices and challenges faced by school staff in preparing students for employment.

### **Target Populations**

1. Local Employers in the Columbus region who hire high school and college graduates for entry-level positions (may be identified and engaged directly or through employer groups including the Human Resource Association of Central Ohio (the local chapter of SHRM), Local Chambers of Commerce, etc.).

2. Columbus City Schools staff who are directly or indirectly responsible for supporting student employment pathways.

### **Sample Research Questions:**

#### **For Employers:**

- What roles, if any, do you generally have for students who have just graduated from high school?
- For a recent high school graduate, what are the most important skills that you look for?
- For a recent high school graduate, what are the most important experiences that you look for?
- For what you consider “entry-level” jobs, what are the consistent reasons you disqualify a candidate?
- What are the skills or attributes that, when seen in a candidate, almost always lead to an offer?
- Aside from actual experience, do elements like effort, resume design, punctuation, grammar, or structure impact whether you engage with a candidate?
- What are the skills you wish school districts taught more deliberately related to workforce readiness?
- What is your typical resume-to-hire ratio for entry-level roles?
- For recent college graduates, what are the most important skills and experiences you look for?

#### **For School Districts:**

- Which staff members are responsible for supporting students in applying for full-time employment?
- Do you have any existing mechanisms to understand how successful students are in finding full-time employment?
- What are the constraints you face in supporting students in job placement?
- What type of experience or qualifications do these staff members have in workforce development?
- What are the key skills students are typically missing upon graduation related to workforce readiness?

This list of questions is not meant to be exhaustive, rather a sample of key questions Aspyr is looking to answer as a part of the SkillsFWD initiative.

#### **Scope of Work**

The selected organization may:

- Design survey instruments tailored for both employers and school staff
- Design and facilitate focus groups or interviews with a representative sample of both populations
- Conduct data collection, including recruitment and logistics
- Provide descriptive and thematic analysis of findings

- Deliver a final report with actionable insights and recommendations
- Provide a presentation of findings to the Central Ohio SkillsFWD Project Team

### **Deliverables**

- Project timeline and work plan
- Survey and focus group protocols
- Cleaned and organized data files (quantitative and qualitative)
- Draft report for review
- Final written report (PDF and editable format)
- Slide deck and presentation (virtual and/or in-person)

### **Branding and Attribution Requirements**

All deliverables, presentations, and public-facing materials developed under this project must comply with Aspyr's branding guidelines. The selected vendor will be required to:

- Include the Aspyr logo on all deliverables and marketing materials related to this project.
- Use Aspyr's official colors, fonts, and visual standards as provided upon contract execution.
- Include the statement *"This research was conducted on behalf of Aspyr, the Workforce Development Board serving Franklin County and Columbus, as part of the SkillsFWD initiative."* on all public-facing documents.
- Submit drafts of any materials intended for external audiences to Aspyr for review and approval prior to publication or distribution

### **Proposal Requirements**

The proposal should include:

- Organization Overview: History, mission, relevant experience
- Project Team: Key personnel, roles, and relevant qualifications
- Approach & Methodology: Outline of survey and focus group design, sampling plan, and data analysis approach
- Timeline: Estimated project timeline (completion expected within 6–8 weeks of project start)
- Budget: Detailed cost estimate including breakdowns by activity
- References: At least two references from previous clients with similar work

### **Ownership and Confidentiality**

All intellectual property will become the property of Aspyr and will be branded as such. All data remains the sole property of the organizations. The vendor shall further agree to keep information related to any contracts with Aspyr in strict confidence, including, but not limited to, the terms of the contract and any confidential business information or proprietary information learned through its dealings with Aspyr.

### **Process for Proposal Submission and Evaluation Criteria**

- Demonstrated experience with education and workforce development research
- Quality and feasibility of proposed methodology

- Qualifications of team members
- Cost-effectiveness
- Timeline feasibility
- Strength of references

### **Project Budget**

The total budget for this project is \$25,000, and all work must be completed by **October 31, 2025.**

### **Instructions for submission**

#### **a) Closing Submission Date**

Proposals are due by 5:00 pm EST on September 2, 2025

#### **b) Inquiries**

Inquiries concerning the RFQ should be made before 5:00 PM EST on August 26, 2025

Kier Scott

[rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org](mailto:rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org)

Email Subject: Central Ohio Talent Network RFQ

Answers to questions will be published in an FAQ document on the website on August 27, 2025, by 5:00 PM. It is the responsibility of the interested parties to check the website.

#### **c) Conditions of Proposal**

All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFQ are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by Aspyr.

#### **d) Submission instructions**

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format via email to Jennifer Roy at [rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org](mailto:rfp-proposal@aspyrworkforce.org) before the closing submission date and time. If the file is too large for email, a link to the file should be provided.

Late arrivals will not be accepted. Mail submissions will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the bidder to ensure that the response is received by Aspyr. A response may be judged nonresponsive and excluded for further consideration if it is not received by the deadline or does not follow the specified format.

#### **e) Right to Reject**

Aspyr reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any and all responses received in response to this RFQ. A contract for the accepted response will be based on the factors described in the RFQ.

**f) Confidentiality**

If the bidder deems any material submitted to be proprietary or confidential, that must be indicated in the relevant section(s) of the response.

**g) Notification**

It is expected that a bidder will be selected within two to three weeks of the closing submission date, although this timeline is subject to change. Aspyr reserves the right to cancel this RFQ at any time. Upon conclusion of negotiations with the successful bidder, all bidders submitting responses to this RFQ will be informed in writing.

**RFQ Released:** August 19, 2025

**Proposals Due:** September 2, 2025, by 5:00 PM EST

**Selection Made:** September 9, 2025

**Project Begins:** September 12, 2025

**Project Ends:** October 31, 2025