

Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County



Request for Quote
Human-Centered Design Services

Issue date: March 4, 2026

Quotes must be received no later than 5:00 pm, March 18, 2026

Respondents must deliver quotes electronically to nicola.wissler@tularewib.org

REQUEST FOR QUOTE
Human-Centered Design Services
Due: March 18, 2026

BACKGROUND

About the Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County (WIB):

The WIB is the local designated workforce development board that administers the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) workforce development funds in Tulare County. The WIB is registered as a California nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization.

At the WIB, we believe that too many people are unemployed or in low-wage jobs that don't sustain their families, and too many businesses have high-quality jobs that go unfilled. The WIB makes critical investments in workforce training and education so businesses can find the skilled workforce they need to succeed, and so Tulare County residents can become that skilled workforce.

Our strategic priorities include:

- **Funding:** We bring money to the region from federal, state, and local government, private businesses, and philanthropy.
- **Broker:** We broker solutions with education and training partners that increase support for in-demand industries and jobs.
- **Convene:** We convene industry through boards and sector partnerships to identify local skills gaps.
- **Invest:** We make investments in high-quality job skills training for workers and workforce solutions for businesses.
- **Guide:** We provide workers with guidance, training, and resources.
- **Measure:** We utilize data to set clear goals, measure progress, and drive decisions to meet the needs of our community.

For more information about the WIB's priorities, strategies, and values, see Exhibit A and go to www.tularewib.org

About the Workforce Development System in Tulare County:

The WIB subcontracts with local service providers to manage the Employment Connection Centers of Tulare County and provide a comprehensive system of training, placement, and career planning (career services) for job seekers throughout Tulare County. Businesses look to the WIB and its system of Employment Connection Centers for qualified employees, expertise in job training and supportive services, and for leadership to mobilize public and private organizations to address workforce needs.

Service Providers manage and operate two comprehensive Employment Connection One-Stop Centers (Visalia & Porterville) and two smaller affiliate Employment Connection Centers (Dinuba & Tulare). They also provide "pop-up" services in rural communities to ensure residents

have access to services. In addition to the contracted service providers, multiple workforce partner agencies are housed at the comprehensive Employment Connect Centers (i.e., Employment Development Department, Department of Rehabilitation, and others) and provide customers with additional employment and training services. The collective Employment Connection System (20+ partner agencies) serves a diverse group of job seekers, including unemployed adults, dislocated workers (recently unemployed), individuals who are justice-involved, individuals with disabilities, individuals receiving public assistance, and others with barriers to employment.

Employment Connection's mission:

- At Employment Connection, we understand that having a good job is key to having a good life.
- We provide services so that Job Seekers in Tulare County can get the guidance, training, resources, and confidence they need to realize their career potential.
- We connect Job Seekers to employers, so Tulare County businesses prosper, and our communities thrive.

For more information about the Employment Connection and its workforce development partners, go to www.employmentconnect.org.

In addition to the career services offered at the Employment Connection Centers, the WIB subcontracts with service providers to manage a comprehensive program, youth@work, for young adults ages 16-24 who face barriers to participating in education, training, and employment. The youth@work Out-of-School Youth (OSY) program is designed to help young adults successfully transition to self-sufficient adulthood. The OSY program is dedicated to working within selected school districts to improve the quality of the emerging workforce by providing eligible young adults with opportunities to acquire the education and skills necessary for a successful transition into adulthood, careers, and further education and training.

SCOPE OF WORK

Through this RFQ, the WIB is seeking competitive quotes for Human-Centered Design services for a period of 24 months. Human-centered design is a methodology that places the user at the heart of the design process. It seeks to deeply understand users' needs, behaviors, and experiences to create effective solutions catering to their unique challenges and desires.

At the WIB, we believe in putting the needs and well-being of individuals, families, and businesses at the forefront of our work. Over the past decade, the WIB has participated in several human-centered design projects, and we are dedicated to incorporating human-centered design into our systems, processes, and future projects.

We are looking for a firm that can provide the following Human-Centered Design elements:

- Facilitate strategic planning sessions.
- Design human-centered design projects based on identified challenges.

- Engage with and interview customers, staff, and partners.
- Work with the WIB team and partners to develop customer journey and customer service maps.
- Participate in the implementation of system and process prototypes for the workforce development system.
- Build capacity within the WIB team to understand and utilize human-centered design as part of our everyday work through staff training (both WIB and Employment Connection System).

This scope of work is not in reference to a specific human-centered design project; rather, the WIB is seeking a firm that can provide the following deliverables for one or more projects from the priority categories identified below, throughout the year. Therefore, the selected firm will need to develop an understanding of our local workforce development system, build trust and relationships with our staff and customers, clearly communicate systemwide needs to the WIB leadership team, be available to assist with multiple design projects throughout the year, and provide leadership and direction to the individuals involved in each of the projects.

PRIORITY CATEGORIES OF WORK

Over the next 24 months, the WIB anticipates that human-centered design projects will primarily fall within the following three categories. The selected firm must demonstrate the capacity to lead projects across all three of these categories as needs arise:

1. Community Council & Community Engagement

The WIB seeks to strengthen its connection to job seekers, businesses, community-based organizations, and system partners through structured engagement and shared design processes. Projects in this category may include supporting the expansion of the existing Community Council and rural service locations:

- Designing and facilitating Community Councils or advisory groups that center on lived experience.
- Conducting community listening sessions, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups.
- Developing engagement strategies that elevate underrepresented voices.
- Co-designing solutions with community members and partners.
- Translating community insight into actionable system improvements.
- The selected firm will help the WIB create sustainable engagement structures that inform strategy, policy, and service design.

2. Workforce Triage & System Connectivity

The WIB is committed to improving how individuals move through the workforce system and how partners coordinate services. Projects in this category focus on streamlining access, improving referral systems, and strengthening cross-agency connectivity.

Projects may include:

- Mapping system entry points and referral pathways for job seekers and businesses.
- Designing triage tools or intake processes that improve customer (job seekers & businesses) experience.
- Identifying breakdowns in handoffs between partners.
- Prototyping improved service coordination models.
- Improving alignment between Employment Connection Centers, youth@work, and system partners.
- Supporting data-informed decision-making that enhances customer flow and outcomes.

3. Design Support & Technical Assistance

The WIB seeks to build internal capacity to apply human-centered design principles across departments and initiatives.

Projects in this category may include:

- Providing ongoing design consultation to WIB leadership and staff.
- Coaching teams through active human-centered design projects.
- Developing toolkits, templates, and playbooks.
- Facilitating staff training and design workshops.
- Support implementation planning and change management.
- Offering rapid design sprints for emerging challenges.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

1. Facilitate strategic planning sessions.
 - Conduct a thorough analysis of WIB's strategic priorities, values, and expected outcomes.
 - Organize and facilitate strategic planning sessions with key stakeholders, including WIB leadership, service providers, and partner agencies.
 - Develop strategic plans that align with WIB's goals and incorporate human-centered principles.

2. Participate in the design process for project prototypes.
 - Collaborate with WIB team members to identify challenges and opportunities within the workforce development system.
 - Lead the design process for project prototypes based on human-centered design principles.

- Ensure prototypes address the needs of job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders in Tulare County.
3. Engage with Customers, Staff, and Partners to collect information and feedback for prototype iterations.
 - Conduct interviews and engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including job seekers, employers, service providers, and partner agencies.
 - Capture and summarize valuable insights and feedback to inform the design of human-centered projects.
 - Utilize surveys, focus groups, and other methods to collect data on user experiences and expectations.
 4. Develop customer journey and customer service maps.
 - Work collaboratively with the WIB team and partners to create detailed customer journey maps for job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders.
 - Develop visual representations of customer journeys and service maps to facilitate understanding and decision-making.
 5. Implementation of new systems and processes.
 - Support the WIB in implementing system and process prototypes developed through human-centered design.
 - Provide guidance and leadership during the implementation phase, ensuring seamless integration into the existing workforce development system.
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the new systems and processes, adjusting, as needed.
 6. Build capacity for staff and partners.
 - Develop and deliver training sessions for WIB staff, Employment Connection System partners, and other relevant stakeholders.
 - Build capacity within the WIB team to understand and apply human-centered design principles in daily work.
 - Provide ongoing support and resources to empower staff and partners to incorporate human-centered design into their respective roles.
 7. Provide progress reports and documentation.
 - Provide regular quarterly progress reports detailing milestones achieved, challenges encountered, and adjustments made to WIB leadership.
 - Document the entire human-centered design process, including methodologies used, key findings, and recommendations for future improvements.
 - Deliver a comprehensive final report summarizing the impact of the human-centered design initiatives on the WIB workforce development system.

- Prepare and facilitate stakeholder presentations to WIB leadership, staff, and other stakeholders to communicate findings, progress, and recommendations as needed or requested.
- Engage in open dialogue to address questions and concerns, fostering a collaborative approach to the implementation of human-centered design solutions.

RESOURCES

It is highly recommended that information gathered from these websites and documents be utilized to gain the proper perspective of the workforce development system in Tulare County.

- WIB website www.tularewib.org
- WIB Theory of Change document (Exhibit A)
- Employment Connection website: www.employmentconnect.org
- Employment Connection Brand Guide (attached)
- IDEO website: www.ideo.com/

ELIGIBLE QUOTE SUBMISSIONS

Professional contractors or other agencies with demonstrated experience and capabilities to produce the deliverables within the parameters of the RFQ are eligible.

INFORMATION REQUESTED FROM POTENTIAL FIRMS

For a firm's submission to be considered responsive, it must include:

- 1) Contact information: Organization name, address, contact information for the person responsible for the quote, and identification of any proposed subcontractors.
- 2) Qualifications: Demonstrate your firm's organizational capacity and qualifications to provide the services described in this RFQ.
Include the following:
 - Description of your organization, including years in operation and core service areas.
 - Experience working with Workforce Development Boards, public agencies, or other complex service systems.
 - Experience supporting projects within the three priority categories and the associated outcomes:
 - i. Community Council / Community Engagement
 - ii. Workforce Triage & System Connectivity
 - iii. Design Support & Technical Assistance
 - Description of key staff who will be assigned to this contract, including roles, qualifications, and relevant expertise.

- Description of your firm's capacity to manage multiple projects over a 24-month period.

3) **Demonstrated Project Experience & Impact:** Provide detailed examples of completed human-centered design projects relevant to the scope of this RFQ. For example, include:

- Project description
- Your firm's role
- Methods used
- Outcomes achieved
- Measurable impact
- Identification of which priority category the project aligns with

Preference will be given to projects demonstrating measurable system improvement, equity impact, strengthened cross-agency coordination, or organizational capacity building.

4) **Approach:** Describe your overall approach to consulting on a human-centered design project, including how consultation from the WIB will be sought in an easy-to-understand, transparent, concise, and efficient manner when developing deliverables. Describe how your firm would approach projects for the three priority categories. Include examples of.

- Tools, engagement methods, and facilitation strategies you utilize
- How you ensure transparency and collaboration with WIB leadership
- How you develop timelines and manage deliverables
- How you support implementation and change management

5) **Budget Narrative:** Please provide the following information for consideration.

- Hourly rate and per/day or per project rate for principal staff member & hourly rate and per/day or per project rate for associate staff member(s) for each of the Human-Centered Design elements listed above.
- All fees, charges, billing rates, and overhead costs must be explained.
- Materials and supplies.
- Any additional costs which are not explicitly listed above.

Budget should reflect the ability to support multiple projects over the 24-month contract period. Budget proposals will be evaluated for clarity, reasonableness, and alignment with the scope of work.

6) **References:** Please provide a list of at least three references (names, telephone numbers, and email addresses) for similar work. Include a specific description of the services provided for each reference.

7) **Other information** that may be helpful to the WIB in evaluating your firm's qualifications.

BUDGET

The Budget for the Human-Centered Design Services Contract is up to \$150,000. This budget may be amended based on additional funding availability from specialized workforce grants.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection committee will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria using a 50 point scale:

- 1) Contact Information (Not Scored)
- 2) Qualifications & Relevance (8 pts)
- 3) Demonstrated Project Experience & Impact (20 pts)
- 4) Approach & Methodology (10 pts)
- 5) Budget narrative (8 pts)
- 6) References (4 pts)

CONDITIONS

The WIB reserves the right to reject any and all quotes received or to negotiate separately with any source whatsoever in any manner necessary to serve the best interest of the WIB.

All awards will be based on fund availability.

The WIB reserves the right to terminate or modify any part of this procurement process at any time and for any reason; to award one contract or multiple contracts; to negotiate changes; to make no awards; and to issue new and/or revised policies and clarifications at any time.

All response packages become the WIB property.

The WIB reserves the right to negotiate modifications to response packages.

INQUIRIES

Questions regarding this solicitation should be directed to Nicola Wissler via email, telephone, or in writing by March 12, 2026. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to your response.

Nicola Wissler, Communications Coordinator
Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County
309 West Main Ste. 120
Visalia, CA 93291
Phone: 559.713.5208
Email: Nicola.wissler@tularewib.org

The Project will be completed under the general direction of the Communications Coordinator of the WIB. All correspondence and questions shall be directed to Nicola Wissler, Communications Coordinator, who will also work with the selected firm to finalize contract details.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Submit an electronic submission of the RFQ to:

Nicola.wissler@tularewib.org

Qualified quotes are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 18, 2026, for consideration.

Late submittals will not be considered.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The Issue

Too many people are unemployed or in low-wage jobs that don't sustain their families, and too many businesses have high-quality jobs that go unfilled.

EXHIBIT A:

Our Values

Human-Centered

We believe in putting the needs and well-being of individuals, families, and businesses at the forefront of our work.

Agile

We adapt quickly to the dynamic needs of our workforce to foster a diverse and resilient local economy.

Inclusive

We believe all community members are essential to our collective prosperity and deserve access to opportunities and resources.

Collaborative

We believe that facilitated collaboration between partners, community leaders, and businesses builds trust and leads to action and innovation.

Skills-Focused

We believe that skills training leads to high-quality jobs that empower workers to support a family and contribute to the success of a thriving community.

Evidence-Based

We use data, research, and customer experience to make informed decisions when designing and implementing policies and programs that serve the diverse needs of our community.

Our Focus

Workers & Businesses

Education

Community & Civic Leaders

Our Strategies



Fund

We bring money to the region from federal, state, and local government, private businesses, and philanthropy.



Convene

We convene industry through boards and sector partnerships to identify local skills gaps.



Broker

We broker solutions with education and training partners that increase support for in-demand industries and jobs.



Invest

We make investments in high-quality job skills training for workers and workforce solutions for businesses.



Guide

We provide workers with guidance, training, and resources.



Measure

We utilize data to set clear goals, measure progress, and drive decisions to meet the needs of our community.

Expected Impact

Our local workforce board and system are agile and responsive to the needs of the community.

Our collaborative partnerships develop essential talent pipelines for Tulare County businesses.

Our workers gain the skills and confidence to find high-quality jobs and make good wages.

Our industries advance and generate pathways for high-quality jobs.

Our businesses prosper, the community thrives, and the economy flourishes.

Our data insights inform business and community leaders on economic and demographic shifts that impact decisions and investments.