

**Food Stamp Employment & Training Venture II
Request for Proposals
(Questions and Answers- Revised Questions 50-53)**

Question 1 What agencies currently operate an FSET Venture program?

Answer:

Agency	
Altamont Program	Oswego County Opportunities
Buffalo City School District	Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute
Center for Employment Opportunities	Rochester CSD
Dutchess BOCES	SSCTA BOCES
Erie 2 BOCES	St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES
Fortune Society	St. Nicks Alliance
Leap Inc dba Brooklyn Workforce Innovations	SUNY Manhattan EOC
Long Beach Public Schools	Western Suffolk BOCES
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow	

Question 2 Can the local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) apply?

Answer: Yes.

Question 3 Can public agencies that are not the LDSS apply for funding?

Answer: Yes. While a LDSS cannot apply, other public agencies may.

Question 4 Are bidders required to ask for the full \$300,000, or can they ask for a lesser amount?

Answer: Bidders may request up to \$300,000 in Federal FSET funds. For every Federal FSET dollar requested, a non-federal dollar from an eligible source must be contributed by the applicant agency. For example, a request for \$150,000 in Federal FSET funds would need to be accompanied with \$150,000 from an eligible non-federal source. A budget (Attachment B6) totaling \$300,000 would be prepared to reflect the total project cost.

Question 5 What is the actual value of an anticipated contract (is it \$300,000 that OTDA will fund with a match of \$150,000 from a prospective bidder)?

Answer: The contract value will equal the amount of Federal FSET funds awarded. In your example, the contract would be written for \$150,000. The budget attached to the contract would include the Federal FSET funds and the non-federal contribution, or \$300,000 in this case.

Question 6 Our agency intends to apply for \$300,000. Does that mean that \$150,000 (50%) will be comprised of eligible funding sources, or that our agency can be awarded \$300,000 from OTDA and that we will have to provide an additional \$300,000 from eligible funding sources?

Answer: See answer to question 4. If your agency applies for \$300,000 in Federal FSET funds, it would need to contribute \$300,000 from eligible non-federal sources toward the total project budget of \$600,000. If your agency applies for only \$150,000 in Federal FSET funds, then only a \$150,000 contribution from eligible non-federal sources are needed for a total budget of \$300,000.

Question 7 If an agency already has a current OTDA contract, are they on the official bidder's list?

Answer: Yes.

Question 8 What should local or county governments, such as a county department of labor, enter on the Bidder Application Form in the section that requires bidders to report whether they are a For Profit or Not For Profit organization?

Answer: Check Not-For-Profit and enter "Exempt"

Question 9 If a current FSET Venture provider is applying for Venture II funding, should they assume that the readers of the proposal will have some familiarity with the program being described and thus focus more on changes/modifications/improvements to the program? Or should a description similar to the one submitted in response to the first FSET program be submitted?

Answer: Applicants should not assume that the reviewers are familiar with their agency or the programs they operate. Applicants should review the RFP for the description of the services being sought, and follow the proposal preparation guidelines in Section IV.

Question 10 Do we need to file letters of support with the grant or just the LDSS form(s)?

Answer: Letters of support from the LDSS are not required. The LDSS Partnership Form is required for each county you plan to serve.

Question 11 Should we include support letters from employers who plan to hire program graduates?

Answer: While not required, letters from employers agreeing to hire Venture II participants could strengthen a proposal's job placement strategy. Please note that the 4th bullet in Section IV. A.2.d. should read "Are there existing business commitments to hire Venture participants."

Question 12 Should the narrative be single or double spaced?

Answer: Single spaced. (12 Point Font)

Question 13 Does the Priority Feature apply to New York City? For example, would a program proposing to serve two of the five counties in NYC, such as the Bronx and Manhattan, be eligible to receive priority points even though there is only one LDSS? If not, how does this feature apply to NYC?

Answer: No. The five boroughs of NYC are considered as one county for the purposes of this RFP. A NYC organization could, for example, earn Priority Feature points if it served the Bronx and Westchester County, or Queens and Nassau County.

Question 14 What is the municipality number, and how do we find out if we have one?

Answer: A municipality number is assigned to government agencies, such as a town or school district. If applicable to your agency, your administrative office should be able to provide you with your municipality number.

Question 15 Please clarify whether the following are eligible funding sources and whether there should be an attached letter attesting to their validity: individual or private donations, agency subsidies, in-kind scholarships for non-profit courses or seminars, in-kind volunteered mental health services, in-kind volunteered instruction (e.g. numerical literacy).

Answer: The required non-federal fund contribution may include donations from non-federal third parties such as charitable foundations/organizations. The non-federal funds cannot include private cash donations from an individual. In-kind volunteered mental health services would not be eligible, since Federal FSET funds cannot be used for medical services of any kind. Regarding the other funding sources listed, it is difficult to provide a definitive answer without more information on the funding source and how it will be used to help FSET recipients. In addition to completing the FSET Local Funding Agreement (Attachment B5), any information that you could include that could demonstrate how it meets the non-federal funding requirement in the RFP would be helpful.

Question 16 If the applicant is a community college, can the match funding be any kind of programs or services that are supported by non-federal (i.e. local or state) funds?

Answer: The fact that the funds come from a non-federal source does not necessarily mean that they can be used as an eligible contribution for FSET Venture II purposes. As outlined on page 5 of the RFP, Federal FSET funds may be used to support specific types of employment preparation program costs for food stamp recipients. The non-federal funds used in conjunction with the Federal FSET funds must abide by these same rules. For example, since Federal FSET funds cannot be used for medical or substance abuse services, the non-federal contribution could not come from these sources. Also, please note FSET Venture is a reimbursement program, not a match program. Federal funds are available to reimburse contractors for 50% of the eligible expenditures.

Question 17 What in-kind non-federal contributions are eligible for use by community-based, not-for-profit applicants to meet the 50% local funding requirement?

Answer: In-kind non-federal contributions may be used **ONLY** by government agencies to satisfy all or part of the local funding requirement. Applicants representing non-profit agencies must provide cash donations from non-federal third parties.

Question 18 Can locally raised funding (including funds raised through taxes and special allocations to various local government agencies) be used for the 50% local funding requirement?

Answer: General tax revenues of the locality could be used to meet the 50% local funding requirement.

Question 19 Are funds granted through a local or state agency, but known to be federal “pass-through” funds eligible towards the 50% local funding requirement?

Answer: No. These funds would still be considered federal, and therefore ineligible to be used for this purpose.

Question 20 Would a WIB (a 501c3 organization) be required to meet the 50% local funding requirement?

Answer: Yes.

Question 21 If a contractor operates a United Way funded Food Card Access Program which screens and helps to enroll individuals in food stamps and a variety of other benefits, could all or a portion of the budget for that program be used as a match? The Food Card Access Program would be used as a recruitment tool for FSET II and would provide benefits screening to FSET II participants.

Answer: Based on the description provided, none of the funds could be used since no allowable FSET activities are being provided.

Question 22 Could New York City Council discretionary funding (from NYC tax levied dollars) be used toward the 50% local funding requirement?

Answer: Yes.

Question 23 Could Federal/State funding from Department of Corrections/Parole/Probation be used toward the local funding requirement?

Answer: The State portion of these funds could be used toward the local funding requirement for FSET Venture II. Please note that if this State funding is already being used as a match for the Federal funds, it cannot be used as the local funding requirement for FSET Venture II. You need to talk with representatives from the Department of Corrections/Parole/Probation to determine the relationship between State and Federal funds you receive.

Question 24 Can the non-federal funds come from state or city sources as well as foundations?

Answer: Yes. A combination of these non-federal funding sources could also be used. Please note that non-Federal funds can only be used if they are not already being used as match against another Federal program.

Question 25 Is there additional proof required of non-federal funding besides the listing in Attachment B-5?

Answer: For the purpose of proposal submission, no additional documentation is required. Once a contract is awarded, the contractor can be required as part of a state or federal review to provide verification that eligible non-federal funds are being used to support FSET Venture activities.

Question 26 If an applicant has all or a portion of their match funding retracted following the contract award, would that applicant only be eligible for FSET II funding which equals the total match still available?

Answer: If a contractor has all of their non-federal funding retracted, they would not be eligible for any federal reimbursement and steps would be taken to terminate the contract. If they had a portion retracted, then they could only receive federal reimbursement equal to the amount of non-federal funds remaining. Based on the amount retracted, OTDA would evaluate whether a viable program can continue to exist and take the appropriate action.

Question 27 Is the 50% reimbursement column the column that reflects the payment per milestone that we will receive from OTDA?

Answer: Yes.

Question 28 In the Reimbursement Tab, should we estimate the annual number of milestones or the number of milestones for the five-year grant period? For example, if we expect to get 100 job entries annually, do we put 100 in the Job Entry cell or 500?

Answer: The reimbursement schedule of the budget should reflect the milestones expected to be achieved during the first year of the contract. In answer to your question, you would enter 100. In the 5 year projected budget you would enter 500 for the 5 year goal.

Question 29 Will the FSET II reimbursement schedule of the budget be used in scoring the budget section? Is this based on the annual number of milestones we expect, or the total number for the five-year contract period?

Answer: The first year reimbursement schedule on the budget is used to score the budget portion of the proposal. As stated in Section IV.B. of the RFP, the 5 year projected budget will not be used in the scoring.

Question 30 Are applicants who have a documented, federally-approved indirect cost rate exceeding 15% still limited to a maximum indirect rate of 15% per FSET II guidelines?

Answer: Yes.

Question 31 Can “in-reach” into the county jail be used to sign-up offenders prior to release?

Answer: No. Participants must be applicants or recipients of food stamps. If clients are currently incarcerated, they would not qualify to be served.

Question 32 Is it acceptable for applicant organizations to provide monetary incentives to students upon the completion of each milestone?

Answer: No. The use of FSET funds or the non-federal funding contribution for incentives is not allowed.

Question 33 Does OTDA have guidance to offer about the balance between different milestones in the FSET II contract? In other words, does OTDA consider educational gains, credentials, and job entries and retentions to be of equal merit?

Answer: Starting on page 26 of the RFP, a description of how budget points are earned is provided. A specific number of points are assigned to each milestone that OTDA is seeking contractors to help participants achieve. The number of points assigned to each milestone are weighted to reflect the outcomes that are most important to OTDA.

Question 34 Is it correct that contractors will receive no payment until a milestone is reached, i.e. until 60 instructional hours are provided?

Answer: Yes. Federal FSET funds cannot be advanced. Since the Career Plan plus 60 Instructional Hours must be achieved before any other milestone can be claimed, reimbursement for this milestone would be the first payment a contractor would receive.

Question 35 Is educational instruction optional as a part of overall program design as long as job skills certification is provided?

Answer: An educational component or a jobs skills component is not a requirement of the program. An agency could, for example, choose to operate a direct job placement program using job readiness activities. Applicants choosing this option would need to make sure that their proposed reimbursement schedule reflects what services they plan to provide and what milestones participants are expected to achieve. In deciding which components to offer applicants should review Section V.C. of the RFP and note how points are assigned to each milestone and how these points are earned as part of the budget evaluation process.

Question 36 Regarding the NRS Level VII educational gain on the TABE, if a student pretests reading at 11.0, would an education gain be reached if the post-test shows 12.9 or would they have to have all 50 questions on the reading test answered correctly?

Answer: If the post-test shows a level of 12.9 that would be considered a gain. They do not need to have answered all 50 questions correctly.

Question 37 Is the National Work Readiness Credential acceptable as an initial certification?

Answer: No.

Question 38 If an applicant is proposing to offer testing for the National Work Readiness Credential as an occupational credential, will the applicant have to be listed on the ETPL?

Answer: The National Work Readiness Credential is not a reimbursable credential milestone.

Question 39 Will OTDA allow an Eligible Training Provider to confer a certificate to an FSET II participant, or must the certification come from a government or NYS agency?

Answer: The job skills programs must be approved by the LWIB, and we prefer that the certificate be issued by an accredited State or Federal agency. However, we understand that certificates conferred by non State/Federal agencies may also be appropriate under the FSET Ventures program. To be considered, applicants must use their program narrative to outline the training curriculum, required hours, competences/skills to be gained, the type of certificate earned and the authority under which the issuing agency can authorize.

Question 40 We are on the Workforce 1 Eligible Training Provider List through SBS and the LWIB. Is this the same as the NYS Workforce Eligible Provider List?

Answer: These lists are not the same. Please go to the link in answer #41 below and follow the instruction for listing any courses not already on the ETPL website.

Question 41 Can OTDA be more specific on how to access the online application for a training program to be included on the ETPL website?

Answer: Go to the NYS Department of Labor webpage at <https://applications.labor.ny.gov/ETPL/> and click on the Provider Home Page. Step by step instructions are provided. Your local One-Stop may also be of assistance.

Question 42 There is an entry-level certification in the practical use of computers and computer applications. Can we offer that and then a Microsoft Office certification as the advanced job skills training?

Answer: If you are referring to Microsoft Digital Literacy, no, we would not accept that as a certification. Although Digital Literacy has important benefits to anyone who is learning computers and aides in developing skills and concepts in the use of technology, we do not feel it rises to the level of the milestone credential.

With technology based credentials it is easy to start splitting up components into smaller credentials of their own such as Microsoft Office into Excel, Word, and Power Point etc. This is **not** the intent of the credential milestone. The credential milestone is aimed at providing a useful and in demand skill

that will benefit the client in the workforce. In our example with Microsoft Office, although each component is valuable, OTDA would require the Microsoft Office credential for reimbursement and not a combination of Power Point, excel , etc. for submission of multiple milestones.

For credentials to be approved it is important for applicants to use their program narrative to outline the training curriculum, required hours, competences/skills to be gained, the type of certificate earned and the authority under which the issuing agency can authorize.

OTDA reserves the final decision of approval over all credentials offered though the FSET program.

Question 43 Can hours of employment count toward the 60 Hours of Instruction requirement?

Answer: In order to get the CP + 60, an employed applicant must complete the 60 hours training – no employment hours can count. However, an employed applicant can still earn the 30 and 90 day retention milestones:

If an applicant is employed PT, but making less than the \$145 per week minimum, the provider could still get the 30 and 90 day retention if wages rise at least to the minimum level.

If an applicant is employed and making at least \$145 per week, they would be eligible for the 30 and 90 day retention milestones if their gross weekly increase to at least \$214 (Step 2).

Question 44 Can retention milestones be claimed for participants who were employed at intake?

Answer: Yes. The 90 day retention milestone can be claimed once the Career Plan plus 60 Instructional Hours milestone is achieved, and provided that the job meets the milestone definition. Please see the chart on page 13 of the RFP.

Question 45 If a contractor trains a participant who is then hired by an organization affiliated with the contractor, could that be an acceptable milestone?

Answer: Any unsubsidized employment that meets the job entry/retention definition is acceptable regardless of the employer's affiliation with the contractor.

Question 46 Can a client claimed for a 30 day job entry milestone also be claimed for a 90 day job retention milestone (see the FSET II Milestone and Reimbursement Chart, p.13)?

Answer: Yes. You can claim 1 Job Entry and 1 Job Retention milestone for each individual who becomes employed and meets the wage requirements of the milestone. An individual who is employed at the time of enrollment and earning at least \$145.00 per week could only be claimed for the 90 day job retention milestone.

Question 47 Can you confirm that the milestone values are the same for the 30-day Job Entry and the 90-day Job Retention?

Answer: Yes. The 30 day Job Entry and 90 day Job Retention milestone reimbursement amounts would be the same if the gross weekly earnings are the same for both periods. Please remember that for that for budget proposal preparation purposes, the highest milestone value (\$2,000) is used to determine the proposed milestone goal. Applicant organizations should be aware that if selected for an award, additional job entries and retentions would be needed in order to earn all the funds associated with this milestone if any of the jobs obtained by participants did pay enough to meet the \$2,000 level. Please see chart on page 13 of the RFP.

Question 48 Will the TANF Services Certification/Application and Review Form be required for FSET II participants?

Answer: No. This program is to serve only food stamp recipients. TANF recipients are not eligible.

Question 49 Please further define and provide criteria for individuals that are exempt from food stamp work requirements.

Answer: Please see section 385.3 (pg. 48) of the Employment Policy Manual on the OTDA internet site. The link below will take you to the listing.

<http://www.otda.ny.gov/legal/>

* Individuals exempt for reasons other than being in receipt of TANF funded assistance may volunteer to participate in FSET services.

Question 50 If we are not subcontracting, can we put N/A on the M/WBE Subcontracting Utilization Form? Would that make the proposal ineligible?

Answer: Answer: The submission of a MWBE utilization plan with N/A entered at the time of submission does not make the proposal ineligible. However, applicants should review Appendix Z which outlines the M/WBE program participation and goal requirements of all State contractors, and be familiar with State MWBE compliance requirements.

Question 51 Can you define suppliers as it relates to this form?

Answer: Suppliers are NYS Certified M/WBE vendors that you plan to contract with or purchase from for the delivery of the FSET Venture II services outlined in your program narrative and budget.

Question 52 Can we put “Undetermined” on this form if we do not know the extent of our subcontracting or use of M/WBE businesses at the time of the proposal submission?

Answer: Yes, Please note that if selected for an award, prior to contract execution a Certification of Good Faith Efforts and M/WBE Subcontractor Utilization Plan must be completed to demonstrate how you plan to meet or exceed M/WBE participation goals (10.5% - MBE 5% or WBE 5.5%).

Question 53 If we purchase uniforms for students in training programs from a business which is owned by a woman, does that business have to complete Attachment B8-2, the supplier’s letter of intent, to participate?

Answer: Attachment B8-2 would only be completed if the business is a NYS Certified Woman – Owned Business Enterprise, or has filed for certification and can provide documentation.

Question 54 How many hours per week can a Food Stamp work registrant be required to participate in FSET Activities?

Answer: If only receiving Food Stamps, the maximum that can be required is 30 hours. If also receiving Safety Net Assistance (SNA), the individual can be required to participate up to 40 hours per week. The actual number required is determined by the district. For example, in NYC, a Food Stamp/Safety Net Assistance recipient is required to participate 35 hours per week.