

Question and Answer Document

#	RESPONDENT'S QUESTION	STATE'S RESPONSE
1	How many qualitative interviews are planned per audience?	At least ten individual, 30-minute max. qualitative interviews are expected per audience. However, additional interviews may be required for certain audience groups depending on if additional insights are required. At least one, 2-hour max. focus group per audience group is required.
2	What incentive amount is planned for the qualitative interviews?	The incentive amount is up to the vendor to budget within its submitted proposal for \$1 million. Incentives can range from gift cards to dinner provided during the focus groups.
3	What length is expected or requested for the qualitative interviews?	Qualitative interviews are tentatively scheduled to be conducted within a month. Focus groups are also scheduled to be conducted within a month. Individual qualitative interviews can be conducted within no more than 30 minutes. Focus groups should take no more than 2 hours.
4	How many focus groups are requested per audience and overall?	At least 1 focus group per audience with 10 audience groups total depending on the size of the focus group. The audience groups are listed in the RFP.
5	What incentive type and amount is planned for the quantitative research?	The incentive amount is up to the vendor to budget within its submitted proposal for \$1 million. Incentives can include gift cards.
6	How many completed surveys are planned per population for the quantitative interviews?	Only one survey will be created. The survey will include high school, young adult and adult Hoosier students. Results from the survey must be cross-tabulated and analyzed to understand responses from each audience group.
7	Is the Commission open to different ordering and timing of the surveys and focus groups if different approaches can be shown to improve the outcomes; or is the order and timing in the RFP a requirement?	Yes, the Commission is open to different ordering and timing. However, work must conclude by the end of June 2024.
8	How does the scope of work described in this RFP relate to and complement the Commission's work to implement HEA 1002?	The insights gleaned from this work will help improve the implementation of items in HEA 1002-2023 including career scholarship accounts, career coaching and navigation, and career discovery meetings.
9	How will the research described in this RFP build on the research presented by the Commission in 2022 regarding Indiana's Education Value Movement?	This research will provide an updated (post-COVID-19 pandemic) and extensive look into the value proposition of higher education in Indiana. This research will examine additional audience groups and demographics that were not covered in the initial Education Value Movement research. Additionally, the research completed through this RFP will not only provide language recommendations but policy recommendations as well.
10	Is the research and reporting described in this RFP required by the Indiana legislature? If so, can you provide the bill number of the relevant legislation?	No, it is not.
11	How does the Commission anticipate sharing and applying the findings and recommendations from this research?	The selected vendor is expected to provide the Commission with a full report of its research findings at the conclusion of this work. The report will be published by the Commission, communicated through a press release, pitched to the media and available on the Commission's website. Findings will be shared during one of the agency's public Commission meetings. Additionally, findings and recommendations from the research will be integrated into Commissioner Lowery's critical talking points used in statewide presentations and media interviews.

12	Does the Indiana Commission for Higher Education plan to develop policy and/or communications materials? If so, does the Indiana Commission for Higher Education have plans to develop policies and/or materials for all the audiences you included in the RFP (i.e. students, parents, teachers, business leaders)? Or are those the audiences you want to include in qualitative research to help contextualize the issue?	Yes, the Commission plans to develop policy and/or communications materials. Those audiences are included in qualitative research to help contextualize the issue.
13	Does the Commission prefer for the key audiences listed on p. 4 of the RFP to be given equal weight in the sampling frame?	For the purpose of qualitative research, yes. However, for quantitative research, only high school, young adult and adult Hoosier students are surveyed. The Commission is open to discussion with the selected vendor regarding weighting audience groups.
14	How will the Commission work with the selected vendor to facilitate recruitment of participants for interviews, focus groups and the survey?	The Commission already has existing relationships with employers, high school teachers, youth-serving community-based organizations and representatives from Indiana's higher education institutions. The Commission intends to work with the selected vendor to make warm introductions with those groups. However, for the other key audience members, the vendor is expected to recruit those participants. The Commission is open to working with the selected vendor to develop a data share agreement for student contact information that does not contain non-directory information.
15	Do you have a legislative request already? Are you responding to or trying to drive the legislature?	No legislative request. The Commission is using this research to guide policy recommendations during the 2025 legislative session.
16	What other projects are happening in the legislature and nonprofit space that may impact this project? Do you have plans to leverage specific partnerships or practices?	This work is a standalone effort. The Commission will inform partner organizations of the findings from the research.
17	For out of state applicants, can we hold on registering with the Indiana Secretary of State until after we are confirmed to have won the business, or do you anticipate that creating timing issues?	The Commission recommends out-of-state applicants proceed with registering with the Indiana Secretary of State to avoid any potential timing issues. Research cannot begin until a contract is signed by the Commission and the selected vendor.
18	In the focus groups section, you state that "the vendor will test various messaging strategies that were developed from the findings of the interviews and survey." However, you also share that the survey will be conducted after the interview and focus groups. Is it acceptable if we adjust the order of required components as we see fit?	Yes. The order can be adjusted. However, that was a mistype within the RFP - the focus group will be used to test messaging strategies that were developed from the findings of the interviews.
19	While we are responsible for research highlights, will we also be responsible for creating messaging materials for the various audiences based on said research?	No. The Commission can create messaging materials in-house.
20	How will this research ultimately be used? The RFP states that the report will include implications and recommends for engaging prospective youth and adult Hoosiers. Will a communications strategy be created as a result of the work? Will a communications campaign be developed?	The selected vendor is expected to provide the Commission with a full report of its research findings at the conclusion of this work. The report will be published by the Commission, communicated through a press release, pitched to the media and available on the Commission's website. Findings will be shared during one of the agency's public Commission meetings. Additionally, findings and recommendations from the research will be integrated into Commissioner Lowery's critical talking points used in statewide presentations and media interviews. Yes, a communications strategy will be implemented and a communications campaign will be created. Both will be created by the Commission based on findings from this research. Finally, the Commission is using this research to drive policy recommendations during the 2025 legislative session.

21	The RFP outlines a process of one-on-one interviews, focus groups, then a quantitative study. Would you be open to an alternative sequencing of these steps?	Yes.
22	We appreciate that the proposal isn't prescriptive in terms of how many completed one-on-one interviews or focus groups need to be done. And it doesn't identify the desired sample size for the quantitative study. We will have recommendations for the number of interviews, focus groups, and quantitative sample size in our approach. Our question: how will you evaluate the cost of the proposals that will likely have different levels of scope and statistical rigor?	The Commission will evaluate all RFP responses and evaluate based on the vendors' abilities to meet the scope of the project within budget.
23	Do you have any relevant, recent research that has been conducted on the topic that you would be willing to share with the team that wins this assignment?	Yes. The Commission is open to sharing research with the team wins that was conducted in 2021. However, the work that is to be done through this RFP is expected to be much more robust and in-depth.
24	We admire the fact that you've identified several audiences to be included in this study - this will provide a thorough understanding of perceptions from a wide range of stakeholders. Have you prioritized the audiences overall and by specific demographic subgroups?	For the purpose of qualitative research, there is not a level of prioritization - the Commission wants to hear from all groups. However, for quantitative research, only high school, young adult and adult Hoosier students are surveyed. All demographics must be included in the analysis; however, special attention must be paid to highlight those groups with historically low participation in college. Demographics with trending declines in pursuing postsecondary education and training include students from low-income households, Black students, Hispanic or Latino students, and male students.
25	The RFP mentions the process of segmenting the audience. Do you have a specific segmentation approach or outcome you are seeking? There are several different ways to categorize audiences, one of which is to simply size and profile groups by demographic or behavioral characteristics. Or we could apply advanced statistics to create a segmentation scheme. We have a strong background in segmentation and can provide a rigorous segmentation scheme with a typing tool that can be used to categorize respondents in future studies if desired.	It is up to the vendor to provide details regarding its methods and available tools to segment the audience. The Commission will evaluate all RFP responses based on the vendors' abilities to meet the scope of the project within budget.
26	The RFP states that organizations that subcontract with women owned business received points in the evaluation process. We are a woman owned business; would we receive points if we are the prime?	Yes, vendor responses receive points if they subcontract with a women-owned business <i>or</i> are a women-owned business. Vendors must complete the Att A – MWBE Commitment Form in the RFP to receive the points and the entity must be on the State of Indiana Certified MBE/WBE/IVOSB list at https://www.in.gov/idoa/mwbe .
27	Do you require the selected vendor to conduct any or all parts of this research in person (face to face), or will digital platforms be viable avenues to respond to your research concerns?	Digital platforms are viable avenues.
28	Can a vendor bid only on a portion of the RFP?	No - the vendor can subcontract with another vendor and this must be included in the vendor's RFP response. However, responses must be for the full RFP.
29	What is the reason this is going out to RFP?	The State of Indiana requires an RFP solicitation process for any professional services exceeding \$50,000 if more than three vendors offer the professional service.
30	Are you open to receiving multiple pricing options?	Yes.

31	<p>In 1.5 Scope of work - qualitative interviews - there is a note that The Commission has existing partnerships with places of worship, community organizations, restaurants, schools, businesses and will establish connections for the winning vendor. Q: Can we expect access to sample from these connections? If so, which audiences? Can we expect access to physical space for interviews and focus groups? If so, please list out which types and if we should assume these come without cost or assume rental fees?</p>	<p>The Commission already has existing relationships with employers, high school teachers, youth-serving community-based organizations and representatives from Indiana's higher education institutions. The Commission intends to work with the selected vendor to make warm introductions with those groups. Representation from all 10 audience groups can be found within those connections. However, the vendor may need to recruit additional participants to ensure a diverse sample. The Commission is open to working with the selected vendor to develop a data share agreement for student contact information that does not contain non-directory information. The Commission will work with existing partners to ensure space is available for individual interviews. If it is not available, virtual and/or phone interviews could be used. Vendors should assume rental fees for focus groups.</p>
32	<p>In 1.5 qualitative focus groups there is note to have Spanish moderation for IDIs and Focus Groups. At this stage, what percentage of the qualitative do you foresee being conducted in Spanish? Which portion for Burmese (noted as preferred not required)? And which specific audiences (e.g., only audiences 1-6 or all audiences including professional/community)?</p>	<p>The Hispanic or Latino population is the fastest-growing population in Indiana. The Commission cannot say what percentage of qualitative research will need to be conducted in Spanish, but the Commission does not want to dissuade or exclude non-English-speaking individuals from participating. Additionally, the Burmese community in Indiana is one of the largest in the country. This would mainly impact audiences 4-6</p>
33	<p>In statistical analysis, regarding the segmentation, should we assume The Commission is in need of a typing tool as part of the deliverables?</p>	<p>It is up to the vendor to provide details regarding its methods and available/necessary tools to segment the audience. The Commission does not have a typing tool.</p>
34	<p>Tentative Timeline - what milestones do you foresee for your needs related to develop recommendations for the 2025 legislative session (through June 2024 but also after June 2024)?</p>	<p>The Commission expects touchpoints throughout the entirety of the project with deliverables of overviews of analysis for each research method (interviews, focus groups and survey) including key takeaways. At the end of the research in June 2024, the vendor is expected to develop a comprehensive full report of the data which will include an executive summary. After June 2024, the contract will be over and all other deliverables will need to be created in-house.</p>
35	<p>Sample sources: What assumptions can we make about The Commission's ability to provide sample (e.g., portion: some or all; counts, vendor's ability to contact etc.) for 1) enrolled students (high school, college, certificate); 2) school administration (teachers, school counselors and staff at Indiana based organizations), 3) community organizations serving youth and 4) representatives from Indiana's higher education institutions?</p>	<p>1) Enrolled students: Some - The Commission is open to working with the selected vendor to develop a data share agreement for student contact information that does not contain non-directory information. 2) Some - However, initial connections provided by the Commission may lead to additional connections to staff and teachers. 3) All and 4) All</p>
36	<p>1.18 Can a MBE or WBE and/or IVOSB be listed as a sub-contractor on more than one proposal that is submitted? We understand the proposal submitter may only submit one proposal, however this is to clarify if there is allowance for a sub-contractor to be considered in more than one proposal that is submitted where they are a sub-contractor?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
37	<p>2.3.1 - must travel already be estimated and included in the proposal submission and overall costs or will this be at cost using the terms provided once the plan is agreed upon?</p>	<p>Yes, travel must be estimated and included in the proposal submission to give the Commission a clear idea of overall costs of the proposal.</p>

38	<p>2.3.2 - if a vendor is not currently registered to do business in Indiana - is it appropriate to do so once they are awarded the project (similar to the note in 1.13 about registering with Sec. of State - or is this expected at time of proposal submission deadline?</p>	<p>The Commission recommends out-of-state applicants proceed with registering with the Indiana Secretary of State to avoid any potential timing issues. Research cannot begin until a contract is signed by the Commission and the selected vendor.</p>
39	<p>In 2.5 "Criteria" points 5, 6 and 7 it notes that MBE, WBE and IVOSB are not required for this proposal (and again in the follow up on 1.2.5 and 1.2.6.) Can you please clarify further if this means if each of these are not included it means the vendor proposal will receive Zero for these 5/10/15 points (not withstanding bonus) if any subcontract meets a requirement but is outside of Indiana?</p>	<p>In order for the subcontractor commitment to result in evaluation points for the Respondent, the entity must be on the State of Indiana Certified MBE/WBE/IVOSB list at https://www.in.gov/idoa/mwbe. Entities outside of Indiana are included on the list.</p>