CENTER OF WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS

Request for Proposals (RFP)

for

Consulting Services for Brand Audit & Stakeholder Perception Analysis

Release Date: November 12, 2026

Turning Research, Relationships, and Resources into Results.

PART I: OVERVIEW

A. About the Organization

Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI) is a 501(c)3 workforce development organization in the Northwest Indiana counties of Jasper, Lake, La Porte, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, and Starke governed by a Board of Directors.

CWI is a multi-faceted organization serving as an intermediary to convene community organizations, educators, and employer & industry groups to facilitate education and workforce solutions, build talent pipelines, provide data and labor market information, offer information about resources, and seed best practices that assist in formulating solutions. CWI also directly delivers services such as career advising, provides credit recovery programming, and has community learning centers for adult education services. Finally, CWI provides programmatic and fiscal oversight for sub-recipients of adult education providers and youth-oriented workforce providers, and for the American Job Centers, known as WorkOne in Indiana.

CWI is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit qualified consulting firms or individuals to conduct a comprehensive Brand Audit and Stakeholder Perception Analysis and provide recommendations for brand positioning, messaging, architecture, and communications alignment.

The selected consultant will work closely with CWI leadership, staff, board members, workforce partners, employers, and community stakeholders to assess current brand awareness, perceptions, strengths, challenges, opportunities, and future positioning.

B. Questions

Questions relating to this RFP may be submitted prior to the deadline of December 15, 2026. Questions must be in writing and directed to Erin Sizemore esizemore@cwicorp.com

C. Responsive Proposals

To be considered responsive, proposals must meet the following minimum criteria:

1. **A proposal with electronic signature must be emailed to esizemore@cwicorp.com with an incoming timestamp of no later than 4:00 pm CST, December 15, 2026.** The timely delivery of a proposal is entirely the responsibility of the proposer. Proposals received after the date and time will not be accepted.

2. Providing incomplete or erroneous information or omitting important information could result in disqualification of the proposal or contract termination.

3. Acceptable proposals will meet the specifications contained in this RFP and the requirements of all applicable statutes, regulations, and policies.

D. Selection Process and Contract Award

No changes, modifications, or additions to a proposal may be made by the proposer after the proposal deadline unless requested by Board staff. Proposals will be evaluated by a Proposal Review Panel comprised of CWI staff and other preselected reviewers. Cost Effectiveness will be a factor in selection criteria. Proposers should not have any communication with the Proposal Reviewers, CWI staff or Board committee members regarding proposals, recommendations or any other issues related to the RFP process. Such communication will disqualify the Proposer.

Contracts may be awarded based on offers received, without discussion of such offers with the proposers. Each offer should be submitted in the most favorable terms, from a price and technical standpoint that the proposer can make. The Board reserves the right to request additional data, oral discussion, or presentation in support of written proposals at a pre-contract meeting.

E. Conditions of this RFP

The cost of developing proposals in response to this RFP is entirely the responsibility of the Proposer and shall not be chargeable to CWI or Board under any circumstances. CWI reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals submitted, to negotiate with all qualified bidders, or to cancel in part, or in its entirety, this RFP. Issuance of this RFP does not commit an award to contract, to pay any costs incurred in advance of the execution of a contract, or to procure or contract for goods and/or services.

The following conditions are applicable to all proposals. CWI reserves the right to:

- Negotiate any and all proposed costs, staffing levels, and all other specifics.
- Fund a lower-ranked proposal over a higher-ranked proposal because of valid policy considerations.
- Change specifications and modify contracts as necessary to facilitate compliance with legislation, regulations, and policy directives; and to manage funding.
- End contract negotiations if acceptable progress, as determined by Board and staff, is not being made within a reasonable time frame.

PART II: SCOPE OF WORK AND SPECIFICATIONS

A. Scope of Work

CWI seeks a consultant with expertise in organizational branding, stakeholder research, strategic communications, and nonprofit or public-sector brand development.

The selected consultant will conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of CWI's brand and communications ecosystem and provide actionable recommendations to support long-term organizational growth and engagement.

Activities may include, but are not limited to:

Brand Audit
Conduct a comprehensive assessment of:

- Corporate branding and visual identity
- Website and digital presence
- Social media channels
- Marketing and outreach materials
- Annual reports and publications
- Presentations and public-facing communications
- Communication channels and content strategies
- Brand architecture and relationship between CWI, WorkOne, and other programs or initiatives

Stakeholder Perception Analysis
Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement process that may include:

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- One-on-one interviews
- Listening sessions

Stakeholders may include:

- Board members
- Leadership and staff
- Jobseekers
- Employers
- Workforce partners
- Educational institutions
- Community organizations
- Government agencies
- Funders and policymakers

Brand Position Assessment
Evaluate stakeholder understanding of:

- CWI's mission and vision
- Organizational role within the workforce ecosystem
- Brand recognition and awareness
- Perceived value and reputation
- Service offerings
- Differentiators and competitive positioning
- Consistency of messaging across audiences

Recommendations and Strategic Guidance
Provide findings and recommendations related to:

- Brand strengths and weaknesses
- Opportunities for improved brand clarity
- Brand architecture and sub-brand alignment
- Messaging framework and positioning statements
- Stakeholder engagement strategies
- Communications consistency
- Brand governance and management practices

Expected Deliverables
The selected consultant will provide:

Deliverable 1: Project Work Plan
A detailed project plan including:

- Methodology
- Timeline
- Stakeholder engagement process
- Milestones and deliverables

Deliverable 2: Brand Audit Report
A comprehensive assessment of current branding and communications materials.

Deliverable 3: Stakeholder Perception Findings Report
A report summarizing:

- Research methodology
- Stakeholder participation
- Key findings
- Themes and trends
- Perception gaps and opportunities

Deliverable 4: Strategic Recommendations Report
Actionable recommendations addressing:

- Brand positioning
- Audience messaging
- Brand architecture
- Communications alignment
- Brand awareness strategies
- Internal brand activation

Deliverable 5: Executive Presentation
Presentation of findings and recommendations to CWI leadership and Board of Directors.

Desired Outcomes

The project should enable CWI to:

- Increase brand clarity and consistency
- Strengthen stakeholder understanding of CWI's mission and impact
- Improve stakeholder engagement and trust
- Align organizational and program-level communications
- Establish a foundation for future marketing and communications strategies
- Support strategic growth and community visibility

B. Proposal Specifications

Please provide a written response not exceeding 15 single-sided pages, excluding attachments.

Proposals should include:

1. **Cover Sheet with:**
    a. Organization name
    b. Contact person
    c. Address
    d. Phone and email
    e. Authorized representative
    f. Signature
    g. Total proposed cost

2. **A description of your organization** including length of existence, vision, mission, and goals.

3. **Project Approach**
    a. Describe:
        i. Proposed methodology
        ii. Research tools and techniques
        iii. Stakeholder engagement strategy
        iv. Brand audit process
        v. Data collection and analysis methods
4. **A clear explanation of how** you or your entity will address the scope of work to be conducted with the Executive Leadership Team.
5. **Credentials and qualifications** of key personnel who will take responsibility for working directly on this project, including references not associated with CWI.
6. **A detailed budget** that breaks out expenses including proposed staff to be paid through the contract (CWI will only reimburse personnel costs for time worked, travel, and material/supplies.) If proposing a flat rate for staffing, please indicate if the rate includes all expenses. Please include a budget narrative for each proposed expense in terms of being necessary, allowable, and reasonable.
7. Provide example(s) of your work.

PART III. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Capabilities

Proposers must be able to demonstrate the administrative and financial capability to effectively and efficiently deliver the services proposed. Administrative capability includes the ability to design and implement the proposed services, achieve the contract objectives, and provide quality service delivery. Proposers must also meet fiscal reporting requirements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP) and show evidence of continued financial stability.

B. Cost and Price Analysis

All proposals will be evaluated based on obtaining the most cost-effective price possible while achieving the highest quality service delivery. To accomplish this, CWI shall conduct a cost and price analysis on proposed costs during the proposal review process. Proposers are encouraged to submit their best offer for providing the services solicited and to thoroughly describe and justify the costs.

The cost and price analysis shall be conducted to ensure that the proposed costs are necessary, fair, and reasonable; to determine if the proposed costs are allowable and allocable; to determine if there is a duplication of costs with other programs; to ensure that the costs are directly
associated with carrying out only the proposed services; and to ensure that the proposed costs will benefit the program.

C. Contract and Payment Method

Contracts are negotiated on a cost reimbursement basis.

Proposers are advised that any contract awarded under this RFP may be modified to incorporate legislative and policy changes, revisions to the program design, alterations of any services and activities provided or a reduction or increase in the amount of funding available.