REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

OCIA Evaluation Specialist

The Mississippi Community College Board
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211
Contact: Kimberly Jones
Phone: 601-432-6131
Fax: 601-432-6365
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The Mississippi Community College Board Evaluation Consultant RFA

The Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) is currently seeking an independent evaluation consultant to conduct an evaluation of the Mississippi Community Colleges National Certification Initiative (MNCI).

1.   **Request for Information**

Questions concerning this RFA should be sent to **Dr. Kimberly Jones** at kjones@mccb.edu. The deadline for submitting written questions by email is **5:00 p.m., January 4, 2019. Copies of all submitted questions and responses will be posted under the RFA - Evaluation Consultant link on the MCCB Assessment webpage at: http://www.sbcjc.cc.ms.us/WkfEdu/asDefault.aspx.** This information will be available to the general public on January 9, 2019.

This document should be consulted frequently in the application development process for any updates or clarifications.

2.   **Submitting Applications**

- The deadline to submit applications is **January 23, 2019, by 5:00 pm CST**.

- Submit applications electronically in Microsoft Word **and** PDF to kjones@mccb.edu.

- Include MNCI Evaluation Application for [Name of Your Organization] in the email subject line.

- No mailed, hand delivered, or faxed applications will be accepted.

- Late applications will be accepted.

- Applications must address all criteria requested to be considered complete. MCCB staff may seek clarification from the applicant at any time, and failure to respond within a reasonable time frame may result in rejection of this application.

3.   MNCI Program Overview

A. Program Grantor

The MNCI is funded through a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

> *The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work, and life.*

B. Introduction

This Request for Applications invites a qualified consultant(s) to design and evaluate the **Mississippi Community Colleges National Certification Initiative (MNCI)**. With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), and other sources, this workforce development and economic competitiveness initiative is managed by the **Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB)** and includes all fifteen community colleges in the state. The initiative seeks to allow the MCCB to implement a statewide project that will enhance its existing Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study by identifying and offering national industry-based certifications for various degree programs.

With the adoption of MCCB's Office of Curriculum and Instruction (OCI) Policy and Procedures Manual in 2013, all curricula developed or revised for career technical education (CTE) programs at Mississippi's community colleges will adopt national standards for industry and identify appropriate industry credentials and certifications. Subsequently, in February 2016 national certifications were adopted as the measure of technical skill attainment for CTE programs where such a certification exist. The MNCI will align community college programs of study curricula with the competency requirements of national-level certifications to ensure that graduates meet current industry needs. The MNCI will help Mississippians enter the workforce with portable certifications, increase employment and wage opportunities, positively impact high school dropout and unemployment rates, reduce the middle-skill jobs gap, and enhance industry recruitment efforts.

The purpose of this evaluation is to generate evidence for state policymakers, college leadership, funders, employers, and other key stakeholders about the process of aligning programs of study to national standards. The impact of this initiative will be its results in preparing and advancing Mississippi's community college graduates to enter the workforce and the Return on Investment (ROI) offered through attaining a nationally recognized certifications. The main priority is to provide national

credentials for CTE students to improve their employability, wage earning potential, and better career advancement opportunities. Ultimately, this evaluation seeks to provide the basis for further deliberations about how to sustain this innovative and effective credentialing initiative as a key workforce and economic development solution in Mississippi.

C. Executive Summary

If America is to increase its workforce and global economic competitiveness, then it is imperative that it significantly decrease the labor market shortage for skilled workers and increase the educational attainment of students exiting postsecondary education. A skills gap exists in Mississippi between middle-skill jobs and workers with appropriate training for these jobs. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report, total job openings by 2020 for middle-skill jobs will increase 34.9 percent nationwide (Lockard and Wolf, 2012). Further it is estimated more than 55 percent of the jobs in MS will be middle-skill jobs. Middle-skill jobs are jobs requiring some education and training above a high school diploma but not necessarily a four-year degree; however, educational attainment levels are not keeping pace with goals for this training group (associate degrees and postsecondary non-degree awards), which ultimately creates a labor market shortage for skilled workers in MS. This challenge is even more evident in Mississippi, where a significant number of residents lack the necessary education and training to secure middle-skill jobs.

The **Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB),** in collaboration with the state's 15 community colleges, seeks to address this challenge by scaling statewide a national credentialing initiative entitled the **Mississippi Community Colleges National Certification Initiative (MNCI).** This initiative targets graduates of various Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study by offering the graduates industry-recognized validation of their knowledge and skills that is transparent, modular, portable, relevant, valid, and equitable. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, students with such certificates and licenses earn 34 percent more than their counterparts without certifications, and they are less likely to be unemployed. Transitioning to national industry certifications, where available, requires adjusting how and what we teach as well as the skills our students learn. Such alignment will create a talent pipeline that certifies to business and industry that our graduates possess the necessary knowledge and skills to perform at high levels in the workplace. As national certifications gain significance in the labor market, it is important that MS community colleges align their CTE programs of study with national certifications. Through MNCI, the MCCB will create MS' first and only repository of national certification information for aligning programs of study to national standards. The MNCI will also provide economics of scale by purchasing

various national certification exam vouchers and software licenses. Certification and licensing present extra costs to MS students; thereby, causing many to forego securing essential certifications that would make them marketable and their certificate or degree more profitable.

D. Goals and Objectives

The MS Community Colleges National Certification Initiative (MNCI) will increase employability prospects among Mississippians by enabling individuals pursuing post-secondary education to gain national industry-based credentials such as licenses and certificates for in-demand jobs. The key outcome will be an exponential growth in the number of Mississippians with national certifications as a result of aligning existing community college CTE programs of study curricula, where available, to national industry-based standards.

The initiative will lead to systemic improvements within the community college system by establishing much needed services. The MCCB will create new infrastructure within the state by creating the MNCI Database to allow colleges to assess programs of study curricula against national, industry-based standards. We conservatively estimate that the MNCI will result in at least a quarter of a million dollars in savings to students. MCCB will negotiate statewide contracts with various testing vendors to secure the best possible test voucher pricing for students. The MNCI will also improve national certification test administration skills among MS community colleges by training college faculty in best practices. The MCCB will be able to provide robust outcome data reporting on national certification attainment across all levels including student, CTE program, college, and system-wide as well as applicable state and federal reporting. The outcome goals and objectives of the MNCI are as follows:

Goal 1: To increase employment and earning opportunities among Mississippians seeking middle-skill jobs.

Objective 1.1: To increase by at least 50% the number of national certifications earned by MS community college career and technical education (CTE) program graduates by June 30, 2020.

Goal 2: To improve the Mississippi Community College system's infrastructure for validating, collecting, and reporting career and technical education (CTE) national certification data and information.

Objective 2.1: To conduct a phased implementation that aligns the curricula, where available, of at least 75% of 82 MS community college career and technical education (CTE) programs of study to pertinent national certification standards by June 30, 2020.

Objective 2.2: To train 100% of MCCB's Office of Assessment staff in the National Center for Construction Education and Research's (NCCER) certification process by June 30, 2020.

Objective 2.3: To establish MCCB as a NCCER Accredited Training Sponsor (ATS) by June 30, 2020.

Objective 2.4: To train a minimum of 2 community college CTE personnel at all 15 MS community colleges to administer at least 1 national certification assessment process by June 30, 2020.

Objective 2.5: To reduce the cost of national certification exams by a minimum of 50% for MS community college career and technical education students by June 30, 2020.

Objective 2.6: To create and maintain a statewide database to collect and report national certification information for MS community college CTE programs by December 31, 2018.

The MCCB and the fifteen partner colleges engaged in a planning process yielding the policies and procedures governing this initiative and the qualifications of college instructors (*the National Certifications Standards and Procedures Manual for the Career Technical Education and Workforce Training and the Qualifications Manual for Postsecondary Career and Technical Education Instructors*). These manuals provide an overview and roll out of the MNCI initiative and may be accessed via the following links:

http://www.sbcjc.cc.ms.us/pdfs/as/standardsandproceduremanual.pdf

http://www.sbcjc.cc.ms.us/pdfs/as/qualificationsmanual.pdf

4.   **MCCB Support for the MNCI**

The MCCB will work with the colleges to identify and adopt national certifications that align to the programs of study. The identified certification(s) must adhere to all elements of a standardized rubric which deems it appropriate to meet the needs of local business and industry while validating it as a recognizable certification for that program of study. The administration of the national certifications testing is managed by the MCCB in coordination with the colleges. The MCCB oversight of the national certifications testing will require the MCCB to be responsible for purchasing statewide testing vouchers in bulk and disseminating to the colleges as needed for the testing. This administration process will provide significant cost and time savings to the colleges.

5. **Marketing**

In addition, MCCB will assist colleges in utilizing their individual communications and knowledge dissemination platforms to raise awareness about the initiative. Marketing and outreach efforts are critical to the success of any college; thus, all 15 community colleges have communications departments that direct their public relations, outreach, and recruitment efforts, including both student and employer recruitment. Communication and knowledge dissemination efforts will entail both traditional and electronic media as well as social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

6. **Collaborative Efforts**

Various groups and associations exist within the community college system that will help to disseminate knowledge and information. For example, the Chief Career-Technical Officers and Deans Association (CCTODA), which assist with system-wide CTE policy development, will support the MNCI by working collaboratively with the MCCB to ensure all colleges engage key audiences such as CTE program graduates and MS employers seeking to hire employees with national industry-based certifications. The MCCB will also work with designated Testing Points of contacts (TPOCs) at each college to facilitate voucher acquisition and examinations. The MCCB will also work closely with CTE faculty, deans, and industry representatives to identify the most pertinent national certifications for alignment. System-wide support is anticipated at the presidential level through the MS Association of Community and Junior College Presidents (MACJC). MACJC presidents often have direct communication with business and industry seeking to locate in the state and will aid with outreach efforts by highlighting MNCI goals through meetings and events with various businesses and workforce development entities. The MCCB will also work closely with various state agencies charged with workforce development efforts such as the MS Development Authority (MDA), and the MS Department of Employment Security (MDES) to further promote national industry-based certifications. In addition, the MCCB Assessment staff will work with certifying bodies to train CTE faculty at all 15 community colleges to administer national certification exams and to articulate the benefits of national certifications; thus, dramatically increasing the number of Mississippians positioned for higher paying jobs.

Additional ongoing programmatic and technical assistance and support, will include:

- *Statewide Team meetings.* The MCCB will convene college CTE deans and directors, faculty, and other college leaders and practitioners in statewide team meetings to discuss the implementation, progress, and challenges of the MNCI.

Whenever possible, the MCCB will leverage existing statewide meetings to reduce the travel burden on colleges.

- *Virtual and in-person workshops.* The MCCB will organize and host webinars or smaller face-to-face discussions with designated college staff to engage in meaningful conversations related to successful program implementation. Polycom video conferences will be scheduled on a regular basis or as needed to make informed group decisions about program initiatives, to provide general updates, and to conduct training sessions.

- *Technical Assistance.* The MCCB will work with testing vendors to provide technical support to colleges before, during, and after test administration. The MCCB Assessment staff will also provide technical assistance as needed to support the MNCI. Assessment staff will work with CTE deans and directors and instructors to identify collective barriers and document program and student success.

- *Tools and Resources.* The MCCB will identify and utilize tools and approaches that will effectively assist colleges with implementing the MNCI. Support will be garnered from testing vendors to provide training and professional development as needed for instructors and other college personnel.

- *Strategic Communications.* The MCCB will develop transparent processes to communicate with college administration, faculty, students, legislators, business and industry, and other key stakeholders. An Assessment webpage will be developed to ensure transparency and key assessment-related updates. An electronic database listing the national certifications will be developed and updated as certifications are approved, suspended, or terminated. A current version of the database will be available for printing or download from the MCCB website. In addition, newsletters, press releases, social media (Facebook and Twitter), email, and other mediums will be used for communication purposes.

- *Policy Support.* The MCCB will work with each college to help identify policy issues or barriers that need to be addressed or clarified at the state level.

- *Braided Funding.* The MCCB will continue its efforts to engage foundations, other state agencies, the state legislature, business and industry partners, and other funders in supporting the MNCI.

7. MNCI Requirements

A. Target Populations

The MNCI target population includes students enrolled in credited career technical education (CTE) programs that lead to national certifications and instructors teaching in those programs of study.

Students:

Students enrolled in programs of study where national certifications have been adopted will be required to take the national certification as the measure of technical skills attainment, in lieu of, the MS-CPAS assessments.

Students must meet the requirements as set forth by the certifying body to attain the national certification.

Instructors:

- Effective July 1, 2017, CTE instructors were required to meet the requirements outlined in the *Qualifications Manual* as well as the Professional Development requirements by the institution's Competency Plan for staff development for each CTE instructor.

- For programs of study where a national certification is identified by MCCB, the instructor must possess the certification or a plan be provided that outlines compliance within 2 calendar years from the date of hire.

- Instructors currently working at a college must obtain the national certification identified by MCCB for their program of study no later than June 30, 2019.

- Must possess the required training to be qualified to teach curriculum for the credential and/or administer student skills tests as required by the credentialing agent such as NCCER, ASE, etc.

- Instructors are required to possess appropriate credentials to meet accreditation requirements for programs with national, state, or programmatic accreditation such as health occupations, cosmetology, barbering, etc. Instructors in those programs of study are not required to seek additional national certification.

8.   **Required Program Elements**

A. **Adoption of National Certifications**

As part of the curriculum revision process, the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment staff will work with CTE program faculty, administrators, and appropriate industry members to identify national standards and appropriate national certifications. The rubrics outlined in the Standards and Procedures Manual will serve as the standards used to approve national certifications for technical skill attainment for a particular program of study. In the instance a national certification cannot be

identified or adopted for a program, the MS-CPAS will be administered as the assessment for technical skill attainment.

B. Contract Procurement

Once a national certification has been adopted, the MCCB will work with the certifying vendor to procure a contract to purchase the vouchers at the lowest possible cost. This coordinated effort will provide efficiency, cost-savings and streamline score reporting for federal and state reporting purposes. With this efficiency in mind, all testing vouchers needed for technical skill attainment reporting at the federal and state levels by colleges will be obtained through the MCCB national certification assessment process. Colleges will have the autonomy of purchasing testing vouchers for technical skill attainment reporting only in the case of national/state licensure/registry exams required to work in Mississippi or new certification approved outside the voucher bulk purchasing cycle. The MCCB will publish a cost sheet that includes student costs for each assessment as well as other pertinent information such as membership, practice materials, etc.

C. Registration and Testing of Students

The MCCB will provide guidance and instructions to colleges on the process for registering students for testing and administering exams per vendor guidelines. Procedures will be streamlined to ensure a smooth flow of ordering vouchers, attaining voucher testing codes, and submitting data to the MCCB. Vendor points of contact will be provided to colleges for any necessary assistance from the vendors. Colleges will be required to submit rosters of anticipated testers and actual testers to aid the MCCB in tracking tested students and reconciling data results.

D. Training and Certification of Instructors

The MCCB will be responsible for working with the colleges to identify instructors who are in need of training/certification for each program of study that has adopted a national certification. The MCCB will pay the initial certification exam cost(s) for all current faculty members who are required to attain the certification(s) based on the program of study they teach. The MCCB will not pay for retake exams or second attempts for instructors who do not pass the certification on the first attempt. The MCCB will pay necessary training associated with obtaining the required preparation for the initial certification exam. The MCCB will also assist colleges in identifying training and assessment opportunities as appropriate for the programs of study. The

MCCB will not pay for licensure fees for instructors (i.e., practical nursing, respiratory technology, cosmetology, barbering instructors, etc.).

E. Registry of Testing Vendors and Assessment Centers

The MCCB will maintain a database of testing vendors for the adopted national assessments. As testing vendors are approved as part of the national certification approval process, the MCCB will maintain a database with the vendor information. The database will be displayed electronically on the MCCB website in a public location for easy access by colleges and will be updated to include all applicable vendors.

F. Training of College Assessment Personnel

The MCCB will assist colleges in securing training of assessment personnel depending on the requirements of the testing vendor. The assistance will include providing points of contact with testing vendors for information on training of college assessment personnel as appropriate to the national certification assessment and program of study. The MCCB will pay any initial vendor registration or set-up fees as required for national certifications associated with technical skill attainment.

G. Data Collection, Reporting, and Communication

The MCCB will negotiate with testing vendors to attain access to test results. In situations where the vendor prohibits providing student-level data, the MCCB will work with the colleges to collect test results and provide reports to the colleges and other required stakeholders at the student and program levels. Timely data reports will be provided to allow colleges to meet reporting requirements.

H. Policy Change

The MCCB will implement necessary policies and procedures in the procurement and dissemination of vouchers, payment collections from and reimbursements to colleges, adoption of national credentials as alternate assessments, and the collection and dissemination of data and required program documents. Colleges will work with the MCCB to revise policies and financing strategies to remove barriers to student progress and improve credential attainment. Policy changes can also help to sustain and expand the MNCI to benefit students seeking national credentials and instructors seeking training and certification. Colleges will implement procedures and

communicate with the MCCB regarding the offset of certification attainment for students and instructors.

I. Sustainability Planning

Colleges and the MCCB will collaboratively identify and adopt national certifications that align to programs of study. The MCCB will provide opportunities for college staff participation in conferences, workshops, webinars, and other technical assistance activities related to the MNCI.

As the MNCI is established and show success, colleges must build capacity to sustain the initiative over time, including incorporating strategies to embed into the college's ongoing operations, expand to non-credited programs, and finance these efforts.

During the 3-year implementation period, colleges must build momentum towards adopting national certifications in lieu of the MS-CPAS, as applicable, and covering the required costs to purchase vouchers for testing. The MCCB will work with colleges to identify national certifications that are program related, locally industry recognized, and cost-effective. Colleges will work to scale resources to sustain the initiative beyond the three-year implementation period. Colleges should implement procedures and build in activities to help achieve this momentum.

9. Evaluation Questions

Additional evaluation questions and/or revisions may be put forth by the selected evaluation consultant.

A. *Has the MNCI program been implemented as planned?*
   a. Are the colleges aware of the MNCI goals and objectives?
   b. Have measures been implemented to ensure appropriate national credentials are identified and adopted?
   c. Is there a strategic process for approving national certifications?
   d. Are college instructors attaining the national certifications aligned to the program(s) of study which they teach?
   e. Are colleges adopting national certifications in lieu of the MS-CPAS?
   f. Are instructors being trained and certified?

B. *Are marketing strategies being utilized to promote the MNCI?*
   a. How are prospective students learning about the national certification initiative?

    b.   What activities or events have been held to promote the initiative?

    c.   How are local business partners promoting the initiative?

C.   *What are college instructors experiencing as an implementation of the MNCI?*

    a.   What are the attitudes of college instructors regarding the MNCI requirements for instructors? Is there a difference in attitudes per program/certification, etc.?

    b.   What do instructors see as barriers to meeting MNCI qualifications requirements?

    c.   How are instructors learning about MNCI qualifications?

    d.   Are instructors satisfied with the MNCI overall?

D.   *What approaches are colleges taking to support the implementation of the MNCI and to determine if there are variations across college regions?*

    a.   What are colleges doing to ensure alignment to MNCI in regards to instructor qualifications?

    b.   What is being done to ensure alignment between programs of study and national certifications?

    c.   What are some best practices emerging from MNCI implementation?

    d.   Are there specific programs that are being impacted more than others as a result of MNCI?

    e.   What are the most significant challenges that colleges are facing in MNCI implementation?

    f.   What are colleges doing to improve their implementation over time?

E.   *What is the Return on Investment (ROI) for instructors and students attaining national certifications?*

    a.   What resources have colleges leveraged for program sustainability beyond the support through the MNCI grant?

    b.   How will student's tuition be impacted as a result of the MNCI?

    c.   Is there a positive ratio of costs and benefits for students?

    d.   Is there a positive ratio of costs and benefits for taxpayers and society?

F.   *What has been the impact of implementing the MNCI?*

    a.   Is the MNCI helping to close the skills gap between middle-skill jobs and workers with appropriate training for the middle-skills jobs?

    b.   What are some implications colleges (CTE deans, directors, and instructors) perceive as a result of the MNCI?

    c.   What changes in state policies and administrative practices were made to facilitate successful program implementation?

     d. What changes in institutional policies and practices were made to promote successful program implementation?

10. **Evaluation Components**

The MNCI evaluation will include the following design components:

- *Theory of Change Development.* The Evaluation Consultant will assist the MCCB in defining a Theory of Change for the initiative. Given state procurement policies, college independency, and the MCCB non-regulatory oversight, there are potential internal and external factors that can influence the program outcomes. The MNCI offers a strategic opportunity to increase student's job skills and employability. The evaluation will assess the soundness of the initiative's Theory of Change in this regard.

- *Implementation Analysis.* The Implementation Analysis will address Evaluation Questions A, B, C, and D. The evaluator will document how the MNCI program is being implemented across the 15 colleges and the experiences of key stakeholders involved in these programs, including students and instructors. Best or promising practices and program design variations that yield better outcomes will be identified and documented. Institutional or state policy changes that facilitated successful program implementation will also be assessed.

- *Outcomes Analysis.* The Outcomes Analysis will address Evaluation Question F. The evaluator will determine the impact of the MNCI in helping students achieve national certifications. This will include a state-level analysis of the various programs of study and certifications. The evaluator will also address changes in policies and procedures as a result of the MNCI.

- *Return on Investment Analysis (ROI).* The Return on Investment Analysis will address Evaluation Question E. The evaluator will identify the approximate MNCI costs for each college using program enrollment data and certification costs. The evaluator will consult with college CTE deans and directors to identify if additional funding is sought to supplement or offset student costs for certifications. Analyzing this information, the evaluator will determine the overall financial impact on students and colleges.

11. **Responsibility of the Applicant**

- Ensure the application submissions are received at MCCB by the deadline and assumes all risks of delivery.
- Ensure that a complete application packet is submitted for review by the deadline.
- Understand that incomplete and unsigned applications cannot be reviewed.
- Place the application and supporting documents in a sealed envelope.

- Ensure that the scope of work and responsibilities can be adhered to as specified.

12.   **Scope of Work**

The Evaluation Consultant will provide a comprehensive analysis of the Mississippi Community Colleges National Certification Initiative (MNCI).
- Design and implement tools to effectively conduct program evaluation.
- Assist with compiling information and writing the annual narrative report that highlights the yearly results of the project.
- Complete the annual W.K. Kellogg Progress Report Evaluation Report for review and approval by MCCB.
- Work closely with MCCB staff (Assistant Assessment Director) to refine the evaluation questions, obtain input on the implementation of the evaluation, and get feedback on its findings. The evaluation consultant will also provide feedback and support to strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders (especially MCCB and community and junior colleges) to effectively support the evaluation.
- Participate in monthly status meetings (in person and/or virtual) with MCCB staff (Assistant Assessment Director) on how the evaluation is proceeding and to address any challenges that are arising.
- Participate in at least two quarterly meetings per year to share evaluation progress, present findings, and increase knowledge about the advances of the initiative.
- Work with the Assistant Assessment Director to determine how to disseminate the evaluation and promote the use of its findings to address policy and programmatic changes. Communications will be adapted to a variety of formats and outlets, including conference presentations and concise summaries targeted to policy-makers.

13.   **Qualifications**

The applicant must have the necessary qualifications and resources to successfully conduct the evaluation components noted above. A unified team of consultants (with a lead and subcontractors) may submit a single bid to ensure that the applicant has the required expertise.

The evaluation consultant and/or evaluation team must have the following qualifications:
- Knowledge of and experience with career technical education (CTE) programs;
- A working knowledge of community college systems and postsecondary programs of study;
- An understanding of national credentials and the importance of national credential;

- Capacity to utilize mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) analysis to address the research questions in the most rigorous manner feasible given the data, information, and resources available;
- Ability to evaluate postsecondary CTE outcomes, along with policy and systems change;
- Ability to engage diverse stakeholders and disseminate evaluation findings to multiple audiences in various formats; and
- Demonstrated capacity to conduct cost-benefit analysis at multiple levels;
- Technical knowledge and skills related to project analysis or program evaluations.

14.   Expected Award Amount

The MCCB will provide up to $140,000 to conduct this evaluation over the course of the three-year evaluation with the funds dispersed as follows:

Year 1 of Program: $40,000.00

Year 2 of Program: 100,000.00

Renewal of the contract for subsequent years will be determined annually and shall be contingent upon continuation of grant funding and successful completion of key deliverables in the preceding year's contract.

Applicants should propose their evaluation plan and offer a schedule of deliverables. Payment points will be negotiated with the selected evaluator.

15.   **Reporting Timeline**

The evaluator will submit the following reports to communicate the findings resulting from the scope of work described above:

- **Year One summative report** due at the end of the first year of program implementation. This evaluation was conducted internally and will be used by the Evaluation Consultation to assess Year 1 activities. Submitted September 2018.
- **Year Two mid-year progress report** will include an analysis of year one summative report with recommendations for programmatic changes. Due March 1, 2019
- **Year Two summative report** due at the end of the second year of program implementation will include an evaluative report due to the grantor. Due September 1, 2019
- **Year Three mid-year progress report** will include recommended programmatic changes needed to meet the stated goals of the project. Due March 1, 2020

- **A final comprehensive evaluation** will include a final implementation analysis, outcomes analysis, and return on investment analysis. This report will also assess the validity of the initiative's Theory of Change. Due September 1, 2020.
- The evaluator will promote continuous improvement of the initiative by providing timely and relevant feedback to MCCB and program sites, especially after interviews and site visits with colleges.

16. **Implementation Period**

The MNCI implementation period is:

Year 1: September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018
Year 2: September 1, 2018 through August 31, 2019
Year 3: September 1, 2019 through August 31, 2020

These funding periods are subject to change, if approved by grantor.

17. **Number of Awards**

Only one award will be made under this solicitation.

18. **Formatting**

The MNCI evaluation application narrative is limited to no more than fifteen (15) double-spaced pages with one-inch margins using 12-point Time New Roman font. The budget section and other attachments are excluded from the 15-page narrative limit.

All pages must be numbered and include the applicants's name in a header. Attachments are limited to ten (10) pages or less.

19. **Evaluation Proposal Scoring**

Evaluation applications will be scored using the following rubric:

Theory of Change Development Design	5 points
Implementation Analysis Design	20 points
Outcomes Analysis Design	25 points
Return on Investment Analysis	30 points
Qualifications of Evaluation Team	15 points
Budget	5 points
Total	**100 points**

20.   Evaluation Timeline (Tentative)

12/26/2018   Release RFA

12/26/2018   Post to the MCCB website

01/04/2019   Deadline for RFA questions

01/09/2019   Deadline for program office response to questions and posting to website

01/23/2019   Applications due by 5:00 p.m. Central Time to MCCB

01/30/2019   Evaluation of applications

02/06/2019   Host Bidder's Webinar

02/08/2019   On-site presentation and contract negotiations with potential evaluator

02/12//2019   Notice of intent to Award

02/15/2019   Contract start date

21. Application Requirements

SECTION OF APPLICATION	RFA SECTION THAT ADDRESSES THIS COMPONENT
COVER PAGES	
Application Cover Letter	Section 23 A
NARRATIVE	
Proposal Narrative (15-page limit)	Section 23 B
ATTACHMENTS	
Attachment A: Schedule of Theory of Change Development Key Activities and Deliverables	Section 23 B.a
Attachment B: Schedule of Implementation Analysis Key Activities and Deliverables	Section 23 B.b
Attachment C: Schedule of Outcomes Analysis Key Activities and Deliverables	Section 23 B.c
Attachment D: Schedule of Return on Investment Analysis Key Activities and Deliverables	Section 23 B.d
Attachment E: Qualification of Evaluation Team	Section 23 B.f
Attachments F-1 and F-2: Writing Samples of Key Personnel	Section 23 B.f
Attachment G: List of Three References with Contact Information	Section 23 B.f
Attachment H: Budget and Cost Justification	Section 23.C

22. Application Components

A. Cover Letter

Please include a **cover letter** as the first page of your application. The cover letter should include the name, title, phone number, and email address of the person submitting the proposal, as well as the organization name (if applicable) and address. The cover letter does <u>not</u> count toward the 15-page limit for proposal narratives or the 10-page limit for attachments.

B. **Proposal Narrative**

    a. ***Theory of Change Development Design (5 points)***

- Please describe how the evaluator will work with the MCCB to complete a theory of change for the initiative.
- Note the roles and responsibilities of key members in this process.
- Provide a schedule of key activities and deliverables for this component, including reporting, communications, and dissemination activities. (*Show this as* **Attachment A.***)*

    b. ***Implementation Analysis Design (20 points)***

- Please describe how the implementation analysis will be conducted and the key research questions will be addressed.
- Identify any additional data or information that might be required to support the implementation analysis.
- Note the roles and responsibilities of key evaluation team members in this process.
- Provide a schedule of key activities and deliverables for this component, including reporting, communications, and dissemination activities. (*Show this as* **Attachment B.***)*

    c. ***Outcomes Analysis Design (25 points)***

- Please describe the outcomes analysis design and how the key research questions will be addressed.
- Explain the data analysis approach to be utilized.
- Note the roles and responsibilities of key evaluation team members in this process.
- Provide a schedule of key activities and deliverables for this component, including reporting, communications, and dissemination activities. (*Show this as* **Attachment C.***)*

    d. ***Return on Investment Analysis (30 points)***

- Describe the ROI analysis approach.
- Explain the data elements that will need to be collected (especially any additional ones that are not currently being considered) and the methodology for analyzing the cost and benefits data.
- Note the roles and responsibilities of key evaluation team members in this process.
- Provide a schedule of key activities and deliverables for this component, including reporting, communications, and dissemination activities. (*Show this as* **Attachment D.***)*

e. ***Potential Challenges or Limitations in Conducting This Evaluation (not scored)***
  - Please outline any potential challenges or limitations that might be anticipated in carrying out this evaluation and any recommendations for addressing these challenges.

f. ***Qualifications of Evaluation Team (15 points)***
  - Please list the members of your Evaluation Team and their roles. Briefly describe the qualifications, including relevant education, training, and evaluation experience of all key personnel (Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators), and the amount of time each will devote to the evaluation.
  - Provide a resume for the principal evaluator and any lead staff. *(Show this as **Attachment E**.)*
  - Provide two writing samples from key personnel. Samples should be from an analysis, program evaluation, or related research. The writing samples should be clear and concise, present data clearly and in an easily understandable format, demonstrate an ability to understand and correctly interpret/analyze data, and be accessible to a non-research audience. *(Show this as **Attachments F-1** and **Attachments F-2** (if applicable).*
  - Describe relevant evaluation work you have conducted for three previous clients.
  - Please submit a list of three references, with contact information. *(Show this as **Attachment G**.)*

C.   Budget (*5 points*)

  a. ***Budget Requirements.*** Applicants must submit a detailed budget and cost justification capturing all expenditures to support the MNCI program evaluation. The budget should include the following line items: salary, fringe benefits, travel, commodities, contractual services, and indirect/overhead. **Note:** Applicants may request budget modifications during each project year only when necessary. (*Show this as **Attachment H**.)*

  The budget and cost justification do not count against the 15-page narrative limit or the 10-page attachment limit.

  Applicants may apply for up to $140,000 over the two-year period.

  IMPORTANT NOTE: The distribution of scoring points above reflects the relative priority MCCB has given to each evaluation component. Application budgets should reflect these component priorities. MCCB

reserves the right to negotiate the scopes and budgets for each component to ensure that the evaluation addresses the needs of the MNCI initiative.

b. *Use of Funds.* MNCI funds can be used flexibly to cover implementation of the evaluation, with the following caveats:

- **Staffing:**
  Applicants will serve in the capacity of a consultant and should specify salary requirements.

- **Allowable Costs:**
  MCCB reserves the right to disallow budget requests deemed unresponsive to program requirements and intent. While applicants are free to propose a project budget to support the proposed activities, such costs must be allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the MNCI contract.

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The Mississippi Community College Board MNCI RFA