

**Request for Proposals  
for  
Market Research Services**

**Rhode Island Student Loan Authority**  
560 Jefferson Blvd., Suite 200  
Warwick, RI 02886

**September 17, 2013**

Please note the following critical dates:

RFP Issued, Posted to RI Division of Purchases website	September 17, 2013
Conference call for questions	September 23, 2013
Due date for receipt of proposals	October 11, 2013
Anticipated decision date	October 18, 2013

# Background

The Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA) was established in 1981 as a public agency of the State of Rhode Island and is a leading originator of state-based education loans. RISLA also offers free college planning services through the College Planning Center of Rhode Island (CPCRI), hosts RIScholarships.org, a statewide database of hard-to-find local scholarships, and Bridge.jobs, a web-based tool that helps students find internships.

RISLA, in partnership with the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB), the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of RI (AICU-RI), the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce (GPCC), and the RI Partnership Project (RIPP) have recently received a grant from the RI Foundation to develop and implement a statewide education and outreach campaign that will address the current and future workforce needs of RI businesses through the expansion of internships and other work-based learning.

RISLA is soliciting proposals from qualified bidders to provide market research services to help expand the base of information on employer views of interns and internships, including implementation of internship programs, recruitment of interns, and supervision of interns.

# Scope of Work

## Objectives

Work-based learning is increasingly being relied upon as an effective strategy to prepare youth and adults for jobs and careers. Work-based learning may include internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, temporary employment, mentoring, job shadowing, and other "hands-on" learning opportunities in which individuals gain the knowledge, skills, and experience that employers are seeking. Increasing the number of internships in Rhode Island will provide greater opportunities for students, adult workers, and businesses.

The aim of the market research is to:

1. Understand the reasons employers hire interns or start an internship program, across different organization sizes and industries.
2. Understand the reasons employers choose not to hire interns or start an internship program, across different organization sizes and industries.
3. Understand the barriers employers face in relation to hiring interns.
4. Understand the decision making process employers undergo when hiring an intern or starting an internship program.
5. Understand who the key decision makers are when it comes to developing an internship program, across different organization sizes and industries.
6. Assess changes in employer opinions about internships before and after the bridge.jobs marketing campaign.
7. Assess reactions to proposed communications to clearly understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of each in order to aid our public awareness strategy.
8. Seek recommendations to best position bridge.jobs to appeal to our target audience.
9. Receive final, interpreted reports of findings which will include an overview of the findings.

## Methodology

Proposer should suggest the best strategy for collecting data via surveys (phone, mail, email, etc). Surveys will need to be conducted before (prior to 12/15/2013) and after (after 9/1/2014) the bridge.jobs marketing campaign to assess changes in employer opinion regarding the use of interns and the development of internship programs. Surveys should include a variety of question types, including multiple choice, rating scales and open-ended questions.

## Target Audience

Target audience should include a sampling of employers who do and do not hire interns. Employers should be across a range of company sizes and industries and should in part include HR team members or others in charge of internship programs.

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## Deliverables

Proposer is expected to:

1. Conduct two sets of surveys, one prior to the bridge.jobs marketing campaign launch, and a second survey approximately one year later.
2. Develop a report that captures the findings of each set of surveys. The final report should include a comparison of results between the two surveys (pre and post campaign) and assess changes that have occurred in employer opinion and use of internships as a result of the bridge.jobs marketing campaign.
3. Presentation of the findings.

## **Proposal Content and Format**

The following should be included in your response:

1. **Cover letter.** The proposer shall furnish a cover letter to introduce the firm or individual and its qualifications and to provide a general overview of the proposal.
2. **Background.** The firm or individual's name and address, including contact information for the primary point of contact for the project. Please include a brief history of the firm, resources, number of employees and focus of services.
3. **Experience.** A description of the firm's relevant experience in all aspects of qualitative research, including providing a summary report which will include interpretation of data and suggested course of action, particularly for public or non-profit entities.
4. **Team Members.** Individual team members who will be assigned and directly involved on this project, their anticipated role, qualifications, and their past experience on similar projects.

5. **Methodology.** Provide a description of the overall methodology. Include a high level description of how the work will be executed (recommended format, number of participants, number of questions asked, types of questions, etc.) and how the survey data will be analyzed.
6. **Timeline.** Please provide an outline of the process for the project, including project deadlines. This outline should also include an estimated completion date for the project.
7. **Fee Proposal.** Include a schedule of fees and costs for market research with a detailed, itemized expense listing including total cost of project.
8. **References.** Provide three (3) client references from previous work including organization name, name of contact, phone number, email address, description of services provided, term of service, result, and any other relevant information. References should be able to speak to your ability to effectively produce market research reports on time and within budget. RISLA is especially interested in references that can attest to the proposer's ability and performance in similar work with similar types of organizations.
9. **Additional Information.** The proposer may list any additional information or data not requested as part of this document quote for services, which the proposer believes should be considered in the evaluation of the response.
10. **Contractual Terms and Conditions.** RISLA intends to execute a contract ("Contract") with the successful Proposer. RISLA may require that the RFP and the terms and conditions attached to it, the Proposer's response, the best and final offer (if required), and any formal addenda to the RFP be included as part of any contract documents. Proposers must include a sample of a standard contract for similar services as part of their response to this RFP.
11. **Insurance.** The Proposer, if selected, must acquire and maintain adequate liability insurance in the form(s) and amount(s) sufficient to protect RISLA, its employees, its clients, and the general public against any loss, damage and/or expense related to its performance under the Contract. The Proposer shall specify in its response to this RFP the nature and limits of all insurance coverage it intends to have.
12. **Equal Employment Opportunity.** The Proposer must include an explanation of its commitment to equal opportunity and affirmative action and include a copy of its equal opportunity and affirmative action policies.
13. **Ethics.** RISLA and its Board of Directors and staff are committed to maintaining the highest standard of ethics in the awarding of contracts. In accordance therewith RISLA requires that the chief operating officer of each Proposer certify the following:

"Neither the Proposer nor any officer, employee, agent, representative or affiliate of the Proposer has given or offered or shall give or offer to any Board Member, employee, or representative of RISLA or to any family member of the foregoing, or to any business by which any of the foregoing persons are employed, or to any official of the State of Rhode Island who is subject to the State Code of Ethics, any gift, loan, political contribution, reward, or promise of future employment based on any understanding or expectation that the vote, official action, or judgment of the person would be influenced thereby, and, that no officer, employee, agent, representative, or affiliate of the Proposer shall have any direct or indirect nonincidental contact with any member of the board of directors of RISLA during any period of time prior to RISLA's award of the Contract, except at a public meeting of the Board of Directors of RISLA or at a meeting of a subcommittee of the Board of Directors."

Any violation of the foregoing shall result in immediate disqualification of the Proposer.

14. **Period of Validity.** Each Proposer's Proposal must include a statement as to the period during which the provisions of its proposal will remain valid. A minimum of 90 days from the Closing Date for Receipt of Proposals is required.

## Selection Process

Review of the proposals will be undertaken by a committee comprised of staff from RISLA, GWB, AICURI and RIPP. This committee will review all proposals and recommend an individual or firm to provide market research services for bridge.jobs. Final selection will be made based on the lowest qualified bid price, experience and expertise in similar research, and a demonstrated ability to provide results.

**A conference call will be held on Monday, September 23, 2013 @ 2:00 p.m. to publicly address any questions individuals or firms responding to this RFP may have. If you are interested in participating in this call, please contact Lindie Thibodeau Johnson at [lthibodeau@risla.com](mailto:lthibodeau@risla.com) for dial-in information.** With the exception of a question and answer process and other communications which might be initiated by the RFP review committee in the course of its review, please note that no member or representative of your organization may discuss the RFP or your proposal with any employee or board member of RISLA, GWB, AICURI, or RIPP, or any other Rhode Island state official, office holder, or employee (including general officers, state legislators and their staffs, etc.) or any other party who might reasonably be considered to have any influence on vendor selection until RISLA has announced a decision with respect to this RFP. **Proposers shall, in their proposals, represent and warrant that they have complied with the preceding sentence.**

**Proposals must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, October 11, 2013.** Please submit five hard copies of your response to 560 Jefferson Blvd, Warwick, RI 02886-1371 Attention: Lindie Thibodeau Johnson and email a PDF of your response to [lthibodeau@risla.com](mailto:lthibodeau@risla.com).

RISLA reserves the right to cancel this request for proposals, to reject any and all proposals submitted, to request any additional clarifying information from any proposers, and to negotiate separately with any and all proposers. Issuance of this RFP does not commit RISLA to pay costs incurred in the preparation of proposals and RISLA reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all proposals, in part or in their entirety.

Rhode Island Student Loan Authority  
Date: September 17, 2013