

RFP for Grant External Evaluator Services

Bidder Questions and Answers

The submission deadline for questions was 5/1/2026 by 4:30 ET

1. What were the learnings or findings from the HAF 2.0 grant? Are there any evaluation reports available

HAF 2.0 exceeded nearly every original goal set for the four-year initiative. In total, 30,288 unduplicated individuals were trained against a goal of 24,000, representing a 26% over-performance. The overall completion rate of 82% reflects strong participant commitment and program design.

Stage I (Occupational Skills Training): Served 7,685 individuals with a 76% completion rate. While enrollment fell short of the goal of 11,109 due to a delayed program launch, federal funding through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Program continues through December 2026, with additional enrollments now counted under HAF 3.0.

Stage II (Incumbent Worker Training): Enrolled 19,181 individuals — nearly double the goal of 9,910 — with an 87% completion rate, well above the 70% target. Demand was so strong that Stage II transitioned to HAF 3.0 funding in August 2024 to ensure continuity. This stage alone received \$11.15 million in expenditures, reflecting its central role in the initiative.

Stage III (College Courses for Career Advancement): Enrolled 3,422 students against a goal of 3,210, with an 82% completion rate — well above the 50% target.

A key finding from HAF 2.0 is the demonstrated success of the Compact Membership model for incumbent worker training. The Maine Community College System entered into signed agreements with 1,785 employer Compact members, collectively representing over 332,000 workers — approximately 55% of Maine's entire workforce. These employer partnerships leveraged more than \$10 million in matching funds from business partners, multiplying the impact of the foundation investment. The Compact Membership model proved effective because it aligns employer workforce needs with the training capacity of the community college system, enabling efficient, large-scale deployment of incumbent training and strong employer engagement.

MCCS has not engaged an external evaluator prior to this RFP.

2. Has an evaluator been working with the HAF to capture data and outcomes on any grants made since January 1, 2025?

Please refer to the answer for question 1.

3. Other than serving 70,505 individuals, what are the program goals, what are the project benchmarks?

Please refer to Appendix A. Note: Follow-up survey data is required for the report under Student Follow-up Outcomes - All Stages.

4. What data are grantees being asked to collect already? What are the grantee reporting requirements?

Grantees are required to collect and report participant, training, and employer data through MCCS systems, including Upskill Maine and college student information systems. Data collected includes participant demographics (e.g., name, contact information, DOB, education level, employment status, gender, race, ethnicity, veteran status, and SSN where required), training details, registrations, and completion outcomes. Compact Member (employer) data is also maintained within Upskill Maine. See Appendix A.

5. Reporting requirements include submission of this data to support performance metrics across all stages, including required follow-up outcome data (e.g., post-training surveys), to enable evaluation of participant outcomes and program effectiveness. Are these grants for short-term training programs (non-degree, certifications)?

These programs include credit and credit-bearing certificates, as well as short-term noncredit training, micro-credentials/badges, industry-recognized certifications, apprenticeships, and licensure offered through MCCS colleges and third-party training providers.

6. Can you describe the three stages (both in terms of the timeline and the number of community colleges and compact members involved)?

All three stages have continued from HAF 2.0 and operate concurrently throughout the grant period. MCCS currently works with over 2,000 Compact Members statewide.

- Stage I – Pre-Hire Training: Provided by all seven Maine community colleges to unemployed or underemployed individuals. Grants are awarded to colleges based on return on investment and workforce need.
- Stage II – Incumbent Worker Training: Compact Members request grant funding to provide training for frontline employees through college or third-party training providers.
- Stage III – College Scholarships: Eligible individuals apply directly for scholarships to enroll in community college courses.

7. How are enrollees identified in the data (to compare to other MCCS students who would have enrolled in their program of study without the HAF funding)?

Enrollees associated with HAF-funded activities are identified through a registration attribute that designates their stage within the grant, providing a consistent method for tracking participants across systems. This attribute enables the identification and analysis of HAF-funded participants. Comparison to other MCCS student populations outside of the grant is not required under this RFP.

8. Is there a unique identifier for students across data systems?

Yes. Participants are assigned a persistent MCCS Student ID that enables tracking across systems.

9. Does the evaluator need to set up a containerized system to securely merge data and analyze outcomes?

No. The preferred method for secure data exchange is SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol), which our ITS team can provision. This approach eliminates the need for the evaluator to establish a separate containerized environment. Contract terms will define data-sharing protocols and require adherence to standards ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all data, consistent with existing legal requirements.

10. How are students selected for participation across sites? How does it differ by college or compact member site?

All participants must meet baseline eligibility requirements: Maine residency (or working a minimum of 12 days per year in Maine), at least 18 years of age, and employment status as required by stage. These requirements apply across all sites.

Participants need to meet eligibility requirements, which are Maine residents or work in Maine for a minimum of 12 days a year, are at least 18 years old, and employed (for Stages 2 and 3). These requirements are across the board.

- Stage I: Pre-hire training delivered at MCCS colleges. Individual programs may have additional eligibility or admission requirements.
- Stage II: Incumbent, frontline workers are approved by their employer (Compact Members) to receive training through the grant management system.
- Stage III: Participants meet the eligibility requirements for the grant, the prerequisites for the course, and are considered part-time (11 credits or less).

11. What percentage of the grant funding has been allocated for evaluation? Or is there a budget range or cap?

In the interest of preserving the competitive nature of the RFP process, MCCS is not disclosing any budget or funding ceiling for this project. Bidders are encouraged to submit their most competitive and cost-effective proposal that addresses the scope of work and complies with RFP requirements.

12. The evaluation calls for pre- and post-training earnings comparisons and outcome tracking across multiple systems. Could MCCS clarify the intended division of labor for data infrastructure work: will MCCS or its designated staff be responsible for linking participant records across internal systems and to external sources such as Maine unemployment insurance wage records, with the evaluator receiving analysis-ready datasets? Or is the evaluator expected to execute that linkage directly, including establishing data-sharing agreements with multiple state agencies? Additionally, are DSAs with relevant agencies already in place from prior HAF grant phases, or would new agreements need to be established?

MCCS will be responsible for obtaining external wage data through its existing data-sharing agreement (DSA) with the Maine Department of Labor. MCCS will submit participant data and provide the resulting wage data to the evaluator for analysis. The evaluator will not be responsible for establishing data-sharing agreements with external agencies.

Outcome tracking across multiple systems refers to the integration of data from MCCS-managed systems. MCCS will provide data extracts to the evaluator; however, the evaluator should be prepared to support data aggregation, validation, and analysis across these sources.

MCCS is seeking an evaluator to help develop a sustainable framework for the collection, linkage, and analysis of pre- and post-training earnings and other outcome measures. Existing DSAs are in place for wage data, and new agreements are not anticipated as part of this work.

13. Is there an incumbent evaluator currently providing services under the HAF 2.0 grant, and if so, are they eligible to submit a proposal for this engagement?

Please refer to the answer to question 1.

14. The timeline indicates the selected evaluator begins work in June 2026 with a first annual report due in September 2026. Given the approximately three-month onboarding window, could MCCS clarify what is expected in that first report? Specifically, will it primarily reflect evaluation design and framework development, or is MCCS expecting preliminary outcome data and findings at that stage?

The first report is expected to focus primarily on evaluation design and framework development. It may include the use of initial or sample data to demonstrate proposed methodologies and reporting approaches; however, MCCS does not expect comprehensive outcome findings at that stage.

15. Rider A Section 1(d) requires Agreement Administrator approval for any sub-agreements. What is the typical turnaround time for that approval, and can subcontractors be named in the proposal to pre-authorize their involvement?

If a firm plans to utilize a subcontractor, this information should be included in the proposal, along with the subcontractor's qualifications, references, and the specific services they will provide. Identification of subcontractors in the proposal does not constitute pre-approval. All subcontractors are subject to review and approval by the Agreement Administrator in accordance with Rider A. Approval timelines may vary, but MCCS will make reasonable efforts to complete reviews promptly to avoid project delays.

16. The RFP references three participant stages (I, II, III) with distinct outcome metrics for each, but does not define the eligibility criteria, program types, or participant characteristics that distinguish one stage from another. Could MCCS provide definitions for each stage, including how participants are assigned, whether a participant can appear in more than one stage across the grant period, and what programmatic or policy logic underlies the distinctions?

All participants must meet baseline eligibility criteria, including being 18 years or older, a Maine resident (or working a minimum of 12 days per year in the state), and holding at least a high school equivalency.

Participants are assigned to stages based on the type of program and their employment status, with each registration carrying a stage-specific attribute. Participants may appear in multiple stages over each reporting period.

- Stage I – Pre-Hire Training Programs: Designed for unemployed or underemployed individuals to support entry into the workforce through training delivered by MCCS colleges. Programs may have additional admission requirements and are aligned with workforce needs using labor market data.
- Stage II – Incumbent Worker Training: Designed for frontline workers employed by Compact Members, focusing on upskilling and advancement through employer-driven training.
- Stage III – Scholarships for Community College Courses: Provides financial support for employed individuals (at least part-time) enrolled in 11 or fewer credits to support continued education and credential attainment.

Programs may be credit or noncredit and vary in length. These stages reflect distinct programmatic strategies to support workforce entry, advancement, and educational attainment.

- 17. For compact member (employer) participants who receive training through third-party providers rather than MCCS colleges, what data (if any) will be available? The metrics reference tracking completers and credential attainment across both MCCS and third-party training, so understanding what's available for the third-party population is critical to design.**

All third-party trainings include the title of the training, start and end dates, credit/noncredit, training description, number of hours, credential type, how the training enhances the participant, participant's demographics, training vendor, employers select did not attend, completed, did not complete or fail for the tracking of completion status, course code, year/term, CIP family, and pathway.

- 18. Will the evaluator have access to participant-level data with persistent identifiers that enable linkage across systems (e.g., linking enrollment records to wage data), or are identifiers anonymized before transfer to the evaluator?**

The evaluator will have access to a persistent MCCS Student ID to enable linkage across systems. Data will be shared in accordance with applicable privacy and security requirements to support analysis.

- 19. What are the expectations for in-person vs virtual engagement?**

Evaluation activities are expected to be conducted primarily in a virtual environment. However, there may be occasional instances where in-person engagement is requested, such as for the presentation of findings.

- 20. Does MCCS have a budget ceiling or expected range for external evaluation services that proposers should be aware of when developing their cost proposals?**

In the interest of preserving the competitive nature of the RFP process, MCCS is not disclosing any budget or funding ceiling for this project. Bidders are encouraged to submit

their most competitive and cost-effective proposal that addresses the scope of work and complies with RFP requirements.

21. Can you share evaluation reports from the previous grant cycle(s)?

Please refer to the answer to question 1.

22. Can you share the logic model for the grant?

Please refer to the answer to question 1.

23. What does the recruitment of participants look like?

Stage I – Pre-Hire Training: Colleges lead recruitment through standard outreach channels (e.g., website listings, community outreach, workforce partners). Some programs include additional screening or employer-informed vetting prior to enrollment.

Stage II – Incumbent Worker Training: Recruitment is employer-driven. Compact Members identify employees for training and submit funding requests; employees are selected by the employer rather than through open enrollment.

Stage III – Scholarships: Participants apply directly for scholarships. Opportunities are promoted through Compact Members, college channels, and general outreach. Eligibility screening occurs as part of the application review process.

24. Can you describe the data currently being collected (or that have been collected), including data sources, frequency, and variables?

Data is collected through multiple systems, including Anthology Student, Upskill Maine, and Modern Campus, and is integrated into the HAF Center database, where participants are deduplicated and assigned a persistent MCCS Student ID.

Data is initially collected at participant intake and updated through registration and completion events. Data is ingested into the HAF Center database daily. Participant completion data is captured at the end of training, with follow-up surveys administered approximately three to six months post-completion via SurveyMonkey.

Variables include participant demographics (e.g., age/DOB, gender, race/ethnicity, education level, employment status), training and program details, registration and enrollment data, completion outcomes, employer/compact member information, and survey-based outcome measures.

25. Are you currently using instruments to survey employers and participants? If so, can you share these documents?

MCCS currently administers participant surveys using SurveyMonkey. Employer surveys are not currently in use. Sample participant survey instruments are included in Appendix B.

26. By the end of this grant, what changes or impacts do you expect to see among different groups of stakeholders (i.e., program participants and compact members)?

Program participants are expected to achieve skill development, credential attainment, continued or new employment, wage gains, and career advancement aligned with training outcomes across the three stages.

Compact Members (employers) are expected to benefit from an upskilled workforce, improved employee retention, and enhanced capacity to meet workforce demands through targeted training investments.

- 27. In the RFP on page 3, there is a reference to Stages I, II, and III. Do these stages align with the three areas mentioned on your website: Pre-Hire Training – learn the skills needed to enter a new profession; Incumbent Worker Training – upskill your current, front-line workforce; Scholarships – continue on in a certificate or degree program? If not, can you provide more information regarding what Stages I, II, and III refer to?**

Yes, the descriptions align with MCCS's three stages.

- Stage I – Pre-Hire Training: Training designed to help individuals enter a new profession.
- Stage II – Incumbent Worker Training: Training to upskill current, front-line employees.
- Stage III – Scholarships: Financial support for individuals continuing in certificate or degree programs.

- 28. On page 3 of the RFP, there is a reference to “Project benchmarks.” under Evaluation Design Objectives. Can you share these benchmarks?**

Please refer to the answer to question 3.

- 29. The RFP references a five-year grant period (2025–2030). Should respondents assume a single, continuous evaluation contract for the full grant period, or anticipate annual contract renewals contingent on funding and performance?**

Yes, respondents should assume a single, continuous contract for the duration of the grant period, subject to standard state contracting requirements and continued funding.

- 30. Are there anticipated changes in program scope, scale, or required evaluation questions over the course of the grant period that proposers should plan for in their designs?**

MCCS does not anticipate changes in program scope, scale, or required evaluation questions; however, adjustments may be made as needed based on program or funding requirements.

- 31. The RFP references a Stage I, II, and III evaluation framework. Can MCCS provide additional detail on how Stage I, II, and III participants are defined operationally?**

Please refer to the answer to question 16.

- 32. Can MCCS provide additional detail on how outcomes, expectations, or performance thresholds differ across these stages?**

Please refer to the answers to questions 16 and 26.

33. How are Stage I–III findings expected to be used differently (e.g., compliance reporting, program improvement, strategic decision-making)?

Findings across Stages I–III are expected to support compliance reporting, program improvement, and strategic decision-making. Evaluation results should help MCCS assess participant outcomes, training effectiveness, and alignment with workforce needs across all stages.

Stage II findings may have an additional strategic emphasis, particularly in identifying employer and industry training trends that can inform the future development of community college-based workforce training opportunities.

34. Are these stages expected to operate sequentially for cohorts, or concurrently across participant groups?

Stages are independent of each other; however, learners may participate in all three stages at some point. Only Stage 1 will function as a cohort, otherwise courses are treated individually.

35. Approximately how many participants are expected within each stage annually?

Please refer to the answer to question 16.

36. Does MCCS anticipate a primarily descriptive evaluation approach, or are quasi-experimental or comparative methods (e.g., comparison groups, counterfactual analyses) expected or encouraged?

MCCS anticipates a primarily descriptive evaluation approach. Quasi-experimental or comparative methods, such as comparison groups or counterfactual analyses, are not expected under this RFP.

37. What evaluation infrastructure or prior evaluation findings exist from the earlier HAF 2.0 grant?

Please refer to the answer to question 1.

38. Are there existing survey instruments, dashboards, reporting templates, or KPIs currently being used?

MCCS currently utilizes several tools and templates to support reporting and evaluation.

Survey instruments: Participant surveys are administered (see Appendix B for sample instruments). Employer surveys are not currently in use.

Dashboards: Tableau dashboards are used to track key metrics, including the number of trainings, headcount, and registrations by stage, with date filtering capabilities.

Reporting templates: MCCS uses standardized templates for performance metrics as well as consistent narrative formats for progress and annual reports.

KPIs: Key performance indicators align with required performance metrics across stages, including participation, completion, and follow-up outcomes. (See Appendix A for metrics)

- 39. The RFP notes that MCCS will coordinate access to relevant data systems. Will MCCS provide datasets that are cleaned, de-duplicated, and aligned across colleges and providers, or should evaluators plan to conduct data cleaning and record matching?**
Data will be provided to the selected firm as mentioned in the answer to question number 9.
- 40. Are there known limitations in data quality or completeness (e.g., missing identifiers, inconsistent reporting across providers) that bidders should be aware of?**
MCCS has identified some data quality and completeness considerations. These include potential inconsistencies resulting from the recent transition to Anthology Student, where some historical data may not have transferred perfectly, as well as occasional missing identifiers that may limit the inclusion of certain records in reporting. Variability in data entry across colleges and systems may also impact consistency.

To mitigate these risks, MCCS conducts regular data health assessments with colleges and ongoing data quality reviews within Upskill Maine and other systems to improve accuracy and completeness over time.
- 41. What participant-level baseline variables are currently collected (e.g., demographics, employment status, wages, employer, program type, prior education)?**
Please refer to the answer to question 4.
- 42. How does MCCS currently define and assess attribution of outcomes (e.g., credential attainment, employment, wage gains) to Center-supported training?**
MCCS currently relies primarily on participant-reported outcomes collected through follow-up surveys to assess credential attainment, employment status, and wage gains. Attribution to Center-supported training is based on this self-reported data and the participant's association with funded training activities, rather than through formal causal or comparison group methodologies.
- 43. Are attribution expectations set by MCCS or the Harold Alfond Foundation?**
Attribution expectations were established by MCCS as part of the grant development and writing process. The Harold Alfond Foundation uses these identified goals and outcomes as part of its ongoing performance metrics. MCCS anticipates a primarily descriptive evaluation approach focused on participant outcomes associated with Center-supported activities, rather than formal causal attribution methodologies.
- 44. Is there a preferred attribution framework or threshold evaluators should apply?**
MCCS anticipates a primarily descriptive evaluation approach and does not require a specific attribution framework or threshold. Evaluators may recommend approaches that align with the goals of the grant and available data; however, quasi-experimental or counterfactual methodologies are not expected under this RFP. Please refer to the answer to Question 36.
- 45. Will evaluators have access to identifiers that allow tracking individual participants across multiple MCCS programs or stages over time?**

Yes, evaluators will have access to persistent identifiers, including the MCCS Student ID, to support tracking participants across systems and all three stages over time.

46. The RFP emphasizes employment and wage outcomes. Is there a preferred primary data source for measuring earnings (e.g., UI wage records, participant self-report, employer data, third-party labor market data)?

MCCS anticipates that employment and wage outcomes will primarily be measured through participant self-reported survey data. Supplemental pre- and post-earnings data obtained through the Maine Department of Labor may also be provided to support analysis.

47. If multiple sources are used, does MCCS have guidance on how discrepancies should be handled?

MCCS anticipates that employment and wage outcomes will primarily be measured through participant self-reported survey data, though wage data obtained through MCCS's DSA with the Maine Department of Labor may also be provided to support analysis. MCCS does not currently prescribe a formal discrepancy resolution methodology and would expect the evaluator to document and apply a reasonable and consistent approach for handling any differences between data sources. Please refer to the response to Question 12.

48. What lag time should evaluators expect for access to wage or employment verification data?

Self-reported participant data is expected to have minimal lag time. Wage and employment data obtained through MCCS's DSA with the Maine Department of Labor may experience longer delays due to employer reporting cycles and state data aggregation timelines.

49. Does MCCS currently have data-sharing agreements in place with the Maine department of Labor or other agencies for wage record access?

Yes, please refer to the answer to question 14.

50. Are evaluators expected to engage all seven MCCS colleges and all participating compact members and third-party providers equally?

Evaluators are expected to engage all seven MCCS colleges and participating Compact Members as part of the evaluation process. MCCS does not expect evaluators to work directly with third-party training providers. The level of engagement across colleges and Compact Members may vary based on program activity, participation levels, and evaluation design.

51. Does MCCS anticipate prioritizing certain colleges, regions, or sectors for deeper qualitative work?

MCCS does not anticipate prioritizing specific colleges or geographic regions for deeper qualitative work. However, MCCS does focus on specific industry sectors, and evaluators may determine that certain sectors warrant additional qualitative analysis based on program activity, workforce relevance, or emerging trends.

52. Approximately how many providers are expected to participate annually in evaluation activities (e.g., interviews, surveys, case studies)?

MCCS does not anticipate the need for evaluators to engage directly with third-party training providers as part of routine evaluation activities. Evaluation engagement may involve engagement with all seven colleges and a representative sample of Compact Members annually. The extent and number of entities involved annually may vary depending on the evaluation design and program activity.

53. Will MCCS facilitate introductions and coordination with colleges, employers, and training providers, or should evaluators plan for independent outreach?

Yes, MCCS program staff will facilitate introductions and coordination with the seven MCCS colleges and participating Compact Members. MCCS does not anticipate the need for evaluators to work directly with third-party training providers. Evaluators may conduct follow-up outreach as needed to support evaluation activities; however, communication with Compact Members, grant funders, and Center staff must be coordinated through the contract administrator.

54. The RFP references annual evaluation reports. Are reports expected to follow a standard MCCS or Harold Alfond Foundation template?

Yes, MCCS uses a standard reporting template for interim and annual reports submitted to the Harold Alfond Foundation, and evaluators should anticipate aligning reports with that format and structure.

55. Is year-to-year methodological consistency required, or is iterative refinement encouraged as the evaluation evolves?

Year-to-year methodological consistency is expected to support comparability across annual reporting periods and performance metrics.

56. Will evaluators be expected to present findings directly to MCCS leadership, boards, or funders?

It is expected that the evaluator will report to and present findings directly to the HAF Center Leadership. As needed or requested, the evaluator may join in presentations to MCCS leadership and our funding partner.

57. Beyond compliance reporting, what would success look like for MCCS leadership in using evaluation findings to inform long-term workforce strategy across Maine?

MCCS operates with an iterative, data-informed strategy, using labor market trends and feedback from industry partners and trainees to guide decision-making. Success would be demonstrated by the evaluation's ability to produce actionable insights that inform program development, identify high-impact training investments, and guide the strategic allocation of funding to meet evolving workforce needs across the state.

58. The RFP notes that IRB approval may be required.

The RFP does not require an IRB.

59. Would MCCS serve as the IRB of record, or is this responsibility expected to fall to the evaluator?

Please refer to the answer to question 58.

60. Is MCCS able to share an anticipated annual or total budget range for evaluation services under the HAF 3.0 grant?

Please refer to the answer to question 11

61. If not, are there internal benchmarks (e.g., percentage of grant funding) that MCCS typically allocates to evaluation?

Please refer to the answer to question 11.

62. How would MCCS like evaluators to address potential risks—such as data system changes, provider attrition, or policy shifts—within proposals and budgets?

We are open to discussing potential risks with the selected evaluator.

63. Are you looking for bidders to provide a more general approach to the evaluation that will be refined/specified in collaboration with MCCS and other stakeholders (if applicable) once the contract has been awarded or are you looking for a specific and highly aligned evaluation approach in this proposal? If it is the latter, do you have a detailed program description and/or logic model that you could share with bidders at the proposal stage?

MCCS is seeking a bidder that can collaborate with MCCS on the development and refinement of the evaluation framework following contract award. MCCS anticipates a primarily descriptive evaluation approach (see response to Question 36). MCCS does not currently maintain a formal logic model; however, existing grant documentation, performance metrics, and program materials will be made available to the selected evaluator to support framework development.

64. To better understand the breadth and complexity of the services funded by the grant, approximately how many different employment sectors are supported/covered by the grant? Approximately how many training service organizations are engaged with the grant?

MCCS supports a broad range of employment sectors aligned with Maine's workforce needs. During the period of performance, the grant has supported over 2,000 employers (Compact Members) and is estimated to reach 70,505 participants. MCCS does not directly engage with training service organizations beyond the seven community colleges; Compact Members select and contract with training providers, resulting in a diverse and variable set of providers across sectors.

65. The RFP states there is a report due approximately three months after the contract is awarded. There likely will not be enough time to gather, analyze, and report on new data in this time frame. What are the reporting requirements for the first (September 2026) annual report? Will there be existing data (collected by the project team and/or institutions) to analyze and report on related to project outcomes? Or will it be more of a progress report on evaluation activities (kick-off) to date (e.g., a finalized evaluation

design, data collection system recommendations, development of primary data collection instruments, evaluation plans for the upcoming year, etc.)?

The first annual report is expected to focus primarily on evaluation design, framework development, and initial evaluation activities completed during the onboarding period. MCCA does not expect comprehensive new outcome findings within the first three months of the contract. Existing data collected by MCCA and participating institutions may be made available for preliminary analysis, sample reporting, or methodology validation, as appropriate. The first report may also include finalized evaluation design elements, recommendations related to data collection and reporting processes, and plans for ongoing evaluation activities.

66. Can evaluation activities be conducted virtually (e.g., virtual meetings, virtual data collection etc.) or do you anticipate that some events may require the external evaluator to be present in person? If so, approximately how many in-person visits should the contract plan/budget for?

Evaluation activities are expected to be conducted primarily in a virtual environment. However, there may be occasional instances where in-person participation is requested, such as presentations of findings or stakeholder meetings. MCCA does not currently anticipate a significant number of required in-person visits, and proposers may budget for limited as-needed travel.

67. Can the external evaluator use their own data collection instruments (e.g., SurveyMonkey for surveys and MS teams/Zoom for interviews) or must the contractor use MCCA instruments or repositories?

Evaluators may use their own data collection instruments and platforms, provided they meet applicable data security and confidentiality requirements. Tool development should result in products, processes, or instruments that MCCA can sustain beyond the contract period, and the selected firm is encouraged to provide recommendations to support ongoing data quality and program improvement. Any instruments, templates, or collected data developed as part of the evaluation should be transferable to MCCA at the conclusion of the contract.

68. Is there an incumbent (organization or firm) for this work?

Please refer to the answer to question 1.

69. Is there a preference for local/regional organizations?

No.

70. Could you share an estimate for the budget range for this evaluation (either total or by evaluation year)? Is there an amount, that bidders should not exceed (upper bound)?

Please refer to the answer to question 11.

71. Is there an estimated budget or budget ceiling for the evaluation?

Please refer to the answer to question 11.

- 72. Since there is a short amount of time between responses to vendor questions (5/6/26) and the proposal deadline (5/15/26), might the proposal deadline be extended by one week?**

The RFP submission deadline remains the same.

- 73. Can additional information for HAF 3.0 be shared to better inform understanding about:**

The nature and extent of MCCS college staff and student engagement, and engagement of training groups, industry groups, and employer partners?

MCCS engages closely with college staff, industry partners, employer (Compact Member) partners, and training providers in the development, design, and delivery of workforce programs. College staff, including workforce and academic teams, play a central role in program coordination, employer engagement, and data collection. Participants engage through training enrollment, completion activities, and required feedback mechanisms such as completion and follow-up surveys.

Industry and employer partners contribute through college-level advisory groups, program design input, statewide industry sector partnerships led by the Harold Alfond Center, and ongoing feedback on workforce needs. Training providers are engaged primarily through employer partnerships, particularly in Stage II incumbent worker training. Engagement is ongoing and iterative, guided by labor market data and direct stakeholder feedback to ensure alignment with workforce demands across the state.

Planned programs and services?

Planned programs and services vary by stage. Stage I and Stage III include MCCS-developed programs and campus-based student supports, such as academic instruction, advising, and other learner support services aligned with workforce pathways. Stage II incumbent worker training is employer-driven, with Compact Members identifying and coordinating training for their employees; these trainings may occur on campus or through third-party providers. Participant services are primarily associated with college-delivered programs, whereas they are not typically provided to participants in third-party training.

The particular data and data elements available through Modern Campus, Anthology Student, Upskill Maine, the Center database, and surveys?

Please refer to the answers to Questions 4 and 5 for additional details. At a high level, data available across systems includes participant demographics, enrollment and registration data, training and course information, completion outcomes, employer/compact member information, and survey data (including required follow-up outcomes under Student Follow-up Outcomes – All Stages). Data is sourced from Modern Campus, Anthology Student, Upskill Maine, the Center database, and SurveyMonkey, with variation in availability and completeness across systems.

Benchmarks?

Please refer to the answer to question 3.

- 74. Has the project (or HAF grant activities implemented prior to HAF 3.0) been evaluated previously and, if so, can the name of the prior evaluator(s) and any other information about prior evaluation activities be shared?**

Please refer to the answer to question 1.

- 75. To rigorously assess participant outcomes, is there potential for (or interest in) collecting data from a comparison group of similar students who do not participate or control assignment of students who are eligible to participate?**

No, there is not the potential or interest in evaluating outcomes against non-participants under this RFP and contract. The evaluation should focus on participants in MCCS-supported programs rather than comparison or control group designs.

- 76. In Year 5, the RFP references annual reports and a final evaluation and formal report (Page 4). Are these three distinct reports?**

The fifth annual report will also serve as the final evaluation report for Year 5. In addition, MCCS expects a separate formal summative report covering the full grant period of performance.

- 77. The first report is due in September (Page 4). Does the project team already have data they anticipate being available to incorporate into that report given the start date is June?**

Please refer to the answer to question 14.

- 78. The RFP mentions case studies and observations as part of the report (Page 4). Are these activities a required element of the evaluation?**

Case studies are not required. Observations are also not required; however, proposers may incorporate observational insights, as appropriate, to support the presentation of results, conclusions, and recommendations.

- 79. Page 6 of the RFP indicates that *“the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy, both public higher education institutions in the state, shall be permitted to piggyback off the MCCS's contract if they desire”* and that *“the Contractor agrees to further provide the products and services, with all the same terms and conditions applicable to these additional entities.”* Can additional information be provided to further explain what the provision of products and services to these entities would entail?**

The RFP includes a standard cooperative purchasing provision allowing the University of Maine System and Maine Maritime Academy to utilize the resulting contract at their discretion. Any such use would be optional and subject to each entity entering into its own agreement with the selected contractor under the same terms and conditions. MCCS does not guarantee participation, scope, or volume from these entities.

- 80. Please confirm the expected scope and level of effort for the First Annual Report due September 2026, given the evaluator's start date of June 2026.**

Please refer to the answer to question 14.

81. Please confirm the expected frequency and cadence of participant and employer surveys (e.g., annual, per cohort, post-training).

Participant surveys are expected to include post-program completion surveys and follow-up surveys approximately three to six months after training completion. Survey timing and cadence may be refined as part of the agreed-upon evaluation framework. MCCS does not currently administer employer surveys, but the selected evaluator may recommend an appropriate approach for employer engagement or feedback collection.

82. Please clarify whether MCCS has established benchmarks or targets for Stage I, II, and III metrics, or if the evaluator is expected to define performance benchmarks as part of the evaluation framework.

Please refer to the answer to question 3.

83. Please confirm expectations for evaluator independence when collaborating with MCCS staff on tool development, data validation, and continuous improvement activities.

The evaluator is expected to maintain independence and objectivity in the design, analysis, and reporting of evaluation findings. While collaboration with MCCS staff on tool development, data validation, and continuous improvement is encouraged, the evaluator should ensure that all findings and conclusions remain impartial and evidence-based. Tool development should result in products that MCCS can sustain beyond the contract period. The selected firm is encouraged to provide recommendations to support ongoing data quality and program improvement.

84. Please confirm whether MCCS expects separate reporting or analysis for MCCS-delivered training versus third-party and employer-based training programs.

MCCS does not require separate reporting by training delivery type (MCCS-delivered, third-party, or employer-based). However, the evaluator may segment or analyze results by delivery type if it provides meaningful insight into program outcomes.

85. Please clarify whether piggyback entities (University of Maine System or Maine Maritime Academy) are expected to participate during the initial contract term or only if they opt in later.

Please refer to the answer to question 79.

86. Could MCCS clarify how responsibilities will be allocated for data extraction, data cleaning, de-duplication, and cross-system record matching across Modern Campus, Anthology Student, Upskill Maine, and the Center Database? Specifically, should the evaluator assume primary responsibility for these functions, or will MCCS provide prepared analytic datasets?

MCCS will provide prepared extracted datasets for evaluation purposes. MCCS is responsible for core data extraction, de-duplication, and cross-system record matching across systems including Modern Campus, Anthology Student, Upskill Maine, and the HAF Center Database. Evaluators should be prepared to support reasonable data validation and

analysis activities as part of the evaluation process. Please refer to the answer to question 9.

- 87. Please clarify the data access and management model, including whether MCCS will provide direct system access or extracted datasets, and how responsibilities will be allocated for data extraction, cleaning, de-duplication, and cross-system matching.** MCCS anticipates providing evaluators with prepared extracted datasets rather than direct access to internal systems. MCCS is responsible for core data extraction, de-duplication, and cross-system record matching across systems including Modern Campus, Anthology Student, Upskill Maine, and the HAF Center Database. Evaluators should be prepared to support reasonable data validation, analysis, and recommendations related to data quality and reporting processes. Please also refer to the responses to Questions 9 and 86.
- 88. Does MCCS expect the evaluation to focus on descriptive outcome reporting (e.g., pre-/post-training comparisons), or is the evaluator expected to implement a more rigorous causal or quasi-experimental attribution framework (e.g., comparison groups, matched controls)?** MCCS anticipates a primarily descriptive evaluation approach focused on participant outcomes and program reporting. MCCS does not expect the evaluator to implement causal or quasi-experimental attribution methodologies, such as comparison groups or matched control designs. Please refer to the response to Question 36.
- 89. The RFP references “statistically valid” outcome reporting. Can MCCS clarify its expectations in this regard, such as minimum sample sizes, confidence levels, precision thresholds, or other standards that should guide analytic design?** The number of completers will vary annually, which may affect achievable sample sizes. MCCS expects the evaluator to produce statistically reliable results, targeting a 95% confidence level and $\pm 5\%$ margin of error where feasible. When these thresholds cannot be met, the evaluator should propose and justify alternative approaches and clearly document any limitations, including sampling strategy, response rates, and any weighting or adjustments used to ensure representativeness.
- 90. What level of disaggregation is required in annual and final reports (e.g., statewide aggregate, by MCCS college, by sector, by training provider, or by employer/compact member), and should this granularity be consistent across all outcome measures?** Disaggregation will be required by stage across reporting. For Stage II, results should distinguish between community college-delivered and third-party training. Additional disaggregation (e.g., by college, sector, training provider, or employer/compact member) may be included where it provides meaningful insight into program outcomes. The level of granularity need not be consistent across all outcome measures; rather, it should be applied as appropriate, based on data availability and the analytical value of the segmentation.
- 91. For the first annual report due September 2026, what participant cohort and performance period should be analyzed? Additionally, when does MCCS anticipate that complete, validated data will be available to support that reporting timeline?**

The first annual report is expected to focus primarily on evaluation design, framework development, and initial evaluation activities completed during the onboarding period. Existing data collected by M CCS and participating institutions will be made available upon onboarding for preliminary analysis, sample reporting, and methodology validation, as appropriate. As context, the first annual report for this grant included approximately six months of participant and program data for Stages I and III. Stage II incumbent worker training began earlier under HAF 3.0 and included approximately eleven months of data.

The specific participant cohort and performance period for the September 2026 report will be finalized collaboratively with the selected evaluator as part of the evaluation framework development process. Data availability and validation timelines may vary by system and reporting source.

92. Can M CCS clarify expectations for disclosure of AI-assisted analysis or drafting?

The provider is not authorized to use any M CCS data in a manner that may train a third-party AI. The provider must provide written disclosures of any substantive component of its work for M CCS that is comprised of AI-generated materials. The expectation is that the provider will discuss the use of AI with M CCS and seek approval prior to entering data into an AI tool.

93. How many subrecipients, if any, should we prepare to monitor?

There are no subrecipients associated with this grant.

94. Based on the scope of work, what is the estimated amount of grant funding, or alternatively, the number of grants to be included in the evaluation?

M CCS grants are not mutually exclusive, and projects or participants may be supported by multiple funding sources. The evaluation will focus on activities supported by the Alfond grant as defined in the RFP. M CCS does not have a fixed number of discrete grants for evaluation; instead, the scope is best understood in terms of program activity, including participants, trainings, and outcomes associated with Alfond-funded initiatives. Proposers should design an approach that is scalable to accommodate variation in program volume.

95. Please clarify expectations for in person engagement, including whether work is anticipated to be performed on-site or virtually, expected frequency of in person meetings, and any location or in state presence preferences across the M CCS colleges.

Evaluation activities are expected to be conducted primarily in a virtual environment. M CCS does not anticipate a significant amount of required on-site work across the colleges; however, occasional in-person participation may be requested for presentations, meetings, or stakeholder engagement activities. M CCS does not currently require an in-state presence, though evaluators should be prepared for limited as-needed travel related to evaluation activities.

APPENDIX A

HAF 3.0 Quantitative Reporting Metrics

REPORTING YEARS	YEAR 0	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
Dates	Jan 25- June 25	July 25- June 26	July 26- June 27	July 27- June 28	July 28- June 29	July 29- June 30

PROGRAM DATA- All Stages	YEAR 0	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
# of staff FTEs directly related to Stage 1 and 2 programming							
# Stage 1 and 2 training programs							
# of micro credentials offered							
# of industry-recognized certifications supported through							
# of programs that stack to additional credentials or credit-bearing pathways							

ENROLLMENT DATA- All Stages	YEAR 0		YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4		YEAR 5		TOTAL	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Stage 1 Enrolled Students	1,896		3,323		3,422		3,508		3,578		3,614		19,341	
Stage 1 Completers	1,327		2,326		2,395		2,456		2,505		2,530		13,539	
Stage 1 Completion Rate	70%		70%		70%		70%		70%		70%		70%	
Stage 2 Enrolled Students	5,923		7,199		7,415		7,601		7,753		7,830		43,721	
Stage 2 Completers	4,146		5,039		5,191		5,321		5,427		5,481		30,605	
Stage 2 Completion Rate	70%		70%		70%		70%		70%		70%		70%	
Stage 3 Enrolled Students	260		1,368		1,409		1,444		1,473		1,488		7,442	
Stage 3 Completers	130		684		705		722		737		744		3,721	
Stage 3 Completion Rate	50%		50%		50%		50%		50%		50%		50%	

EMPLOYER DATA-All Stages	YEAR 0		YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4		YEAR 5		TOTAL	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
# of Employers in Compact	1,520		1,565		1,604		1,636		1,653		1,653			
# Sending Employees to Stage 1 Training														
# Sending Employees to Stage 2 Training														
# Sending Employees to Stage 3 Training														

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS - All Stages	YEAR 0		YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4		YEAR 5		TOTAL	
	Served	Completed	Served	Completed	Served	Completed	Served	Completed	Served	Completed	Served	Completed	Served	Completed
# of students														
women														
men														
non-binary (Unknown)														
white														
non-white														
age 18-24														
age 25-34														
age 35-44														
age 45+														
employed at enrollment														
h.s. graduate only														
some college/ no credential														
credential < 2-year degree														
2-year degree or higher														

FOLLOW UP SURVEY DATA

Student Follow-up Outcomes - All Stages	YEAR 0	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
Stage 1							
# completers							
# unemployed who became employed within 3 months of							
# attaining industry-recognized credential post-training							
# continuing education post-training							
# continuing at MCCS							
Stage 2							
# completers							
# employed in same job as pre-training							
# employed in new job as a result of training							
# receiving wage increase related to training							
# receiving promotion related to training							
# attaining industry-recognized credential post-training							
# continuing education post-training							
# continuing at MCCS							
# completing an additional MCCS program or certificate							
Stage 3							
# completers							
# employed in same job as pre-training							
# employed in new job as a result of training							
# receiving wage increase related to training							
# receiving promotion related to training							
# attaining industry-recognized credential post-training							
# continuing education post-training							
# continuing at MCCS							
# completing an additional MCCS program or certificate							

APPENDIX B

Training Completion Survey

You have been asked to complete this anonymous exit survey as a participant in a grant-funded training program through the Maine Community College System. The data collected from this survey will be used in grant reporting to the Harold Alfond Foundation and the State of Maine. Thank you for responding!

* 1. Please select the training provider:

* 2. What training did you participate in?

* 3. How would you rate this training on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most positive)?

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* 4. How would you rate the instructor on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most positive)?

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* 5. Would you recommend this training to others?

- Yes
 No

* 6. What was the MOST valuable aspect of the training for you?

* 7. What was the LEAST valuable aspect of the training for you?

* 8. What was your goal in coming to the training?

* 9. Were you able to achieve that goal?

* 10. Do you think the training increased your chances of finding a job or moving up in this field?

Yes

No

* 11. Were you employed when you enrolled in the training?

Yes

No

Training Completion Survey

12. If yes, where were you employed?

13. For how long?

14. What was/is your position or job title?

15. What was/is your hourly wage or salary?

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

The Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce and Maine's Community Colleges take the protection of your personal information very seriously. As a participant in grant-funded short-term training, the data collected in this survey will be securely communicated with state agencies to track project success. Data will be anonymized and aggregated for reports outside of Maine State agencies. If you have any questions about data usage, don't hesitate to get in touch with mccsalfondtraining@maineccc.edu.

To view the Maine Community Colleges' privacy policy, please [click here](#).

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

Employment status at time of training

1. Were you employed when you received training?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

Training employer

2. Who was your employer?

3. Are you still with this employer?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

4. Are you performing the same job?

Yes

No

5. Did you receive a promotion?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

Promotion

6. What was your job title at the time of training?

7. What is your job title now?

8. What was your annual salary **at the time of training**?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> \$0 - \$19,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$45,000 - \$49,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$50,000 - \$54,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25,000 - \$29,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$55,000 - \$59,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 - \$34,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$60,000 - \$64,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$35,000 - \$39,999 | <input type="radio"/> Over \$65,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 - \$44,999 | |

9. What is your **current annual salary**?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> \$0 - \$19,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$45,000 - \$49,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$50,000 - \$54,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25,000 - \$29,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$55,000 - \$59,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 - \$34,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$60,000 - \$64,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$35,000 - \$39,999 | <input type="radio"/> Over \$65,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 - \$44,999 | |

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

10. Are you employed now?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

11. Are you actively searching for employment?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

12. Who is your current employer?

13. What was your current annual salary?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> \$0 - \$19,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$45,000 - \$49,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$50,000 - \$54,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25,000 - \$29,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$55,000 - \$59,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 - \$34,999 | <input type="radio"/> \$60,000 - \$64,999 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$35,000 - \$39,999 | <input type="radio"/> Over \$65,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 - \$44,999 | |

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

Continued Training

14. Have you pursued or completed additional training?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

15. Which best describes your training efforts?

- I have selected training I want to take in the future.
- I have completed a badge or industry recognized credential.
- I am currently enrolled in training.
- I have completed a certificate or degree.
- I completed training that provided an industry recognized license.

16. Did you complete training through Maine's community colleges?

- Yes
- No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

17. Will you pursue additional training in the future?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

18. Would you explore training options through Maine's community colleges?

Yes

No

Harold Alfond Center Follow Up Survey

Job Satisfaction

19. Which factors are most important to you in your career? Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote or hybrid work option |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Salary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mission of organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to advance | <input type="checkbox"/> Work / life balance |

20. Do any factors impact your ability to train or work? Please check any that apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities in my area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of training | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote or hybrid work options |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eldercare | <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job matching my skillset | <input type="checkbox"/> Uniform, tools, or equipment necessary |

21. Please share how this training opportunity has impacted you.