PURPOSE: To provide a response to vendor questions for the clarification and/or modification of project detail and specifications.

1) Did MCTC have any assistance in writing the five-page evaluation section of the US DOL proposal submitted last summer? If so, who is that evaluator? Is this evaluator eligible to compete on this RFP submission?

Yes. Mountwest Community & Technical College hired the firm, Thomas P. Miller & Associates, to assist with the grant writing, inclusive of the evaluation section. The firm is NOT eligible to compete on this solicitation for proposals.

2) What is the full amount of the DOL grant over the four-year grant period?

The full amount of the grant award is over $9M.

3) What is the criteria for TAA eligibility?

TAA is the acronym for the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. This program provides benefits and opportunities to laborers who have lost jobs due to overseas trade. Eligibility for the TAA program is determined by an application process through the US Department of Labor. More information regarding the TAA program can be accessed by visiting http://www.doleta.gov.tradeact.

4) Do all TAA eligible workers and veterans referred to the consortium, and recruited by the consortium become Heroes for Hire students?

Heroes for Hire students are those who enroll in an educational program offered by the participating institution which is funded by the grant. However, there is an emphasis on recruiting, enrolling, and graduating students who are or were in the armed forces or TAA eligible.

5) Has student performance data and employment data been kept in a database for TAA eligible and veteran students prior to Heroes for Hire?

Student performance and employment data are or will soon be tracked in each participating institution’s student information database.

6) Can you provide the evaluation plan that was included in the Round IV TAACCCT grant application?

To assist potential respondents, Mountwest Community & Technical College shall incorporate the attached H4H Evaluation Plan as Appendix K to RFP MCTCH4H-15.02. This is the evaluation plan as proposed to the US Department of Labor as part of the grant proposal, as required for all grant submissions for TAACCCT Round 4. The expectations as set forth in this evaluation plan provide guidance for the final Evaluation Plan that will be formulated by the consortium, with input and direction from the external evaluator, during the first year of the grant.
7) Did Mountwest Community & Technical College receive any outside assistance in preparation of the evaluation section of the TAACCCT grant application funded by the US Department of Labor? If so, what entity wrote the design of the evaluation presented to the US Department of Labor? Is this evaluator allowed to apply to MCTCH4H-15.2 titled “Project External Evaluator”?  

Please refer to the response as provided in Question 1 of this Addendum.

8) Can clarification be provided on the number of formative evaluation reports requested, and the applicable due dates?  

Please refer to the attached H4H Evaluation Plan, incorporated into the RFP as Appendix K.

9) Page 12 of the RFP notes that the Qualifications and Experience section of the proposal should “include a description of the qualifications and experience of the lead evaluator and any other evaluators (not to exceed two pages per evaluator)...”; can you please confirm that the term “Evaluator” refers to the company rather than individual proposed staff?

The term “Evaluator” can either refer to an individual or a firm.

10) The proposal format specifications detailed on page 12 of the RFP requests a reference list of current and/or past clients. Are 3 references sufficient?

Yes; three (3) references are sufficient.

11) According to Page 4 and Page 7 of the RFP, the contract starts on March 16, 2015 and ends in September 2018. Page 12 asks for “a fee and expense proposal broken down by fiscal year and tied to each major deliverable in your evaluation plan”. Can you please confirm that the proposal budget should be broken down by the following periods?

The proposal budget should be broken down by the “Federal” fiscal year (October 1st through September 30th). The successful respondent should note however, for financial reporting purposes, invoicing for services rendered should be prepared in a manner consistent with the College’s fiscal operating year which is the 1st of July through the 30th of June.
APPENDICES (Incorporated and Binding)

Heroes for Hire Project Narrative................................................................. Appendix A

Vendor Preference Certificate................................................................. Appendix B

Addendum Acknowledgement Form......................................................... Appendix C

WV-96 Agreement Addendum................................................................. Appendix D

Purchasing Affidavit.................................................................................. Appendix E

Confidentiality Policies and Information Security Accountability Requirements........ Appendix F

Vendor Registration and Disclosure Statement........................................ Appendix G

Request for Tax Identification (W9).......................................................... Appendix H

Instructions to Bidders (HEPC MANUAL 2004).......................................... Appendix I

Terms and Conditions (HEPC MANUAL 2004)........................................... Appendix J

TAACCT 4 – H4H Evaluation Plan (Incorporated)........................................ Appendix K
Addendum 1 – Issued 02/09/2015
I. Introduction

Throughout the grant period, the consortium partners will facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of Heroes for Hire through a third-party evaluator. The primary purpose of this evaluation is twofold. First, the consortium seeks to determine whether, and in what ways, this program can provide lessons and best practices for future endeavors at these and other institutions. Second, the consortium endeavors to determine if the program helps participants achieve better employment and earnings outcomes than a similar group of individuals that did not take part in the program.

II. Summary of Chosen Methodology

The evaluation will include a comparison group design to measure the impact of the intervention on participants in terms of employment and earnings; as well as an implementation evaluation that will track progress; record lessons learned throughout program implementation; measure perceived program strengths, weaknesses and value to participants, partners, and faculty/staff; and recommend modifications to improve program performance. The evaluator’s approach will ensure the consortium understands not only the outputs and outcomes of the program, but also the underlying processes, assumptions, modifications, successes and obstacles that led to those results.

III. Timeline for Transmitting Reports

The evaluation process will produce five main reports: one (1) Final Evaluation Design Report, outlining the full scope and methodology for evaluation implementation; three (3) Program Progress reports to be delivered at the end of Program Year 1, PY2, and PY3, which will include progress toward outcomes, qualitative impacts on participants, lessons learned to date, methodologies employed, and recommendations for program modifications, if any; and one (1) Comprehensive Program Impact Report to be delivered at the end of PY4 that will include all the components of the summary reports as well as the
results of the comparison group assessment. The WVCCTC consortium will submit these deliverables to the Employment and Training Administration but will not have editorial control over report content.

IV. Participant Outcomes Assessment

Study methodology. Given the program’s focus on TAA-eligible workers, who cannot be randomly assigned, the evaluator will conduct a comparison group methodology study. This will be a quasi-experimental analysis, assessing the impacts of training completion upon the target participants, and the causal parameter of interest is the effect of treatment on the treated.

Source and size of comparison group. The evaluator will create an appropriate comparison group by identifying TAA-eligible individuals who seek employment in nursing, health informatics, chemical technology, and geospatial science at the West Virginia Region 2 and Region 7 Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) during the first three years of the program. If it is not possible to develop a comparison group of sufficient size from the pool of TAA-eligible non-program participants who seek employment in those specific fields, TAA-eligible non-participants seeking employment in other, related fields (e.g., allied healthcare occupations) will be included. The evaluator will work with the Region 2 and 7 WIBs to determine an appropriate comparison group sample size at the beginning of the project. The evaluator will conduct a power analysis as part of the final evaluation design report in PY1. A sample size of approximately 2400 is needed to produce a confidence interval of 2. Data for the comparison group will be delivered to the evaluator at the beginning of PY4.

Assignment to comparison group. When the evaluator has the full scope of comparison-potential non-participants, propensity score matching will be used to create a matched sample of treatment group and comparison group who are similar based on demographics (including age, race, sex, and previous educational attainment). A nearest neighbor 2:1 match will allow two people in the comparison group to be matched with each program participant based on sample sizes available. In the case that a 2:1 match is unable to be made due to a lack of available control group participants, the evaluator will engage in 1:1
matching among treatment and comparison group participants. Workforce Investment Act (WIA) records will ensure the comparison group does not include individuals who attended any of the consortium colleges during the program implementation period.

**Outcomes for comparison.** Outcomes for comparison are employment placement, retention, and starting wage. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) will be performed for each of the three outcomes of interest.

**Data sources and collection methods.** The Region 2 and Region 7 WIBs currently conduct follow-up WIA-eligible participant employment and wage data collection, and they will continue to do so for the purposes of this evaluation. Program staff and the evaluator will supplement the WIBs’ efforts to collect follow-up data from comparison group participants via follow-up phone calls to determine employment status and outcomes, when necessary. To obtain outcome data on the treatment group, program staff will track employment and wage outcomes for participants through internal processes in place at individual institutions and follow-up phone calls and surveys. The consortium will purchase software with the capability to automate follow-up efforts by leveraging text and e-mail messages with links to surveys and phone call reminders for participants to report data. Finally, a prior TAACCCT project, Bridging the Gap, has established an agreement with Workforce West Virginia, the state’s Labor Market Information system, to obtain wage information for participants by matching Social Security Numbers with earnings and employer information as well as unemployment insurance records. These strategies will enable the consortium to collect robust participant follow-up data.

V. Program implementation Assessment

**Study methodology and data collection methods.** The implementation evaluation will primarily analyze the steps taken by the consortium to create and run the Heroes for Hire program, and, in the final report, assess the operational strengths and weaknesses of the project after the implementation. The implementation study will examine the core activities undertaken throughout the program and the outputs produced by each activity, including program completion, credential attainment, employment placement,
retention and wages. In addition to measuring outputs, the objective of the implementation evaluation is to improve the effectiveness of program activities by monitoring progress throughout the life of the program; engage stakeholders and ensure their insight is incorporated into program decisions; and provide evidence for why program elements are or are not producing expected outputs. Monthly implementation phone calls with program leadership will allow the evaluators to understand progress as it occurs and provide timely, objective feedback throughout the program that can be incorporated without interfering with analysis.

Progress toward achieving output targets will be evaluated on-site at four points in the program (once during each implementation year and once in the year after project completion). Findings will be detailed in program progress reports, developed toward the end of PY1, PY2, and PY3. The evaluator will objectively examine how the program has been implemented at each stage, and to what extent the program is aligned with the original plan through interviews with staff and partners, using a progress rubric developed in collaboration with the consortium.

Each fall, the evaluator will conduct on-site key informant interviews and focus groups involving program leadership and instructors to specifically address the four primary questions: (1) How the particular curriculum was selected, used, or created; (2) How programs and program design were improved or expanded using grant funds, delivery methods offered, administrative structure, support and other services offered; (3) Assessment tools and processes, including whether there was an in-depth assessment of participants’ abilities, skills and interests to select participants into the grant program, who conducted the assessment, how results were used, and how career guidance was provided; and (4) partner contributions to the project, including what contributions each of the partners made, what factors contributed to partners’ involvement or lack thereof, which contributions were most critical to program success, and which contributions had less of an impact. The implementation evaluation will also include focus groups with student participants each fall and address questions such as: How and why did you get involved in the program? How have courses contributed to your knowledge and skill development in your chosen career
path? Did elements of modified course and program delivery (contextualized remediation, modularization, Prior Learning Assessments) help you be more successful in the classroom, and if so, how? What support services did you receive through the Heroes for Hire program and how did they help you? Each fall the evaluator will select a random sample of students enrolled in the program to invite to participate in the focus groups. If the number of students enrolled in a program is relatively small, all will be invited to ensure a sufficient sample size for qualitative data collection. All focus group sessions will be recorded, and findings inputted into qualitative analysis software for in-depth analysis.

VI. Identification of Third-Party Evaluator

The consortium has not yet engaged a third-party evaluator for the Heroes for Hire program. Upon notification of award, lead institution Mountwest will develop and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for evaluation services. The RFP will specify the qualifications respondents should possess, including a demonstrated track record of conducting rigorous quasi-experimental impact and implementation evaluations of workforce development and education programs. Program staff and institution administrators will evaluate responses and select the evaluator offering an optimal combination of high-level service, expertise, and reasonable cost estimate. The consortium will endeavor to engage in a contractual agreement with an evaluator by January 15, 2016.

VII. Data Security

The highest precautions will be taken to protect identifying student information. To transmit participant and comparison group data, consortium institutions, the WIBs and the evaluator will use Citrix ShareFile or a similar service, which provides SSAE 16 audited datacenters and AES 256-bit encryption to ensure the privacy of confidential files during transfer and in storage. All stored files with personally identifying data will be encrypted and stored on secure servers using TrueCrypt or similar software. The team will execute a data sharing agreement that includes security and audit procedures to protect participant and comparison group data.