REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

PROJECT NO. RFP 17-73

MARKET RESEARCH

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS NO.1

Date: September 19, 2017

To: Prospective Respondents

From: Procurement Operations Department, Houston Community College

Subject: Questions and Answers Responses

1. There is the potential that the impact of Hurricane Harvey could impact the results of the survey, for instance barriers such as cost of attending or transportation may become more pronounced. Should the research schedule be adjusted to allow additional time for recovery efforts to progress before fielding begins?
   Response: HCC is currently collecting data regarding the impact. Thus, it is too soon to make a decision regarding this subject. Please proceed as if the research will begin in January 2018.

2. How large are the databases for each audience (prospects, currents and non-returning) and what fields are included? Can we assume that HCCC can send the vendor contact information for all audiences, such as email and phone numbers?
   Response: Information about the size of current and non-returning populations can be found at the academic dashboard at www.hccs.edu/dashboard. Of roughly 57,000 students (SCH, academic credit) in Fall 2016, 29% of them did not return in Spring.

   Our Achieving the Dream cohorts of entering new and transfer students are about 10,000-12,000 students per year. Their Fall-Fall and Fall-Spring retention rates are on the academic dashboard (above).

   For prospects, HCC should be able to provide the vendor with email addresses, phone numbers and in some cases, addresses as long as we adhere to any applicable federal guidelines.

3. The RFP indicates that 5-8 customer market segments with the most opportunity for recruitment, admissions, enrollment and retention should be identified. Is it acceptable if the total number of segments is greater than 8 with the top 5-8 segments prioritized and profiled?
   Response: Yes

4. Could you please explain the relationship between the Centers of Excellence, Continuing Education, and the West Houston Institute? you have both workforce and academic centers. Do students engage in interdisciplinary programs across them?

   Response: a) The *West Houston Institute* ***is irrelevant to this study.*** *Centers of Excellence* ***(COE's) offer Semester Credit Hours programs and Continuing Education provides CEUs for program completion.***

5. Would a student be able to access programs/courses and engage with each in an integrated fashion?
   Response: Yes.

6. You have both workforce and academic centers. Do students engage in interdisciplinary programs across them?
   Response: No.

7. What is HCC's geographic footprint from which students are pulled?
   Response: On the academic dashboard, the "map" page has a map showing the geographic distribution of our students. The outlined area is our service area (~625 sq. miles) in which most of our students reside.

8. Could HCC offer on-site facilities or classroom to conduct qualitative research or focus groups with the different target audiences?
   Response: Yes

9. Is insight regarding how to reach customer segments a desired output? While not explicitly identified in the RFP, such information would be invaluable when developing a marketing plan. If desired, how detailed or prescriptive do you expect this data to be?
   Response: a) Yes. b) Fairly detailed (i.e., HCC needs a complete picture of customer segments -- who, what, why, where of these segments).

10. The RFP indicates an expectation that messaging that resonates with students or has the potential to resonate with them will be identified. Should the development of new messaging be included in the proposed plan? Are you anticipating messaging strategies will be developed and delivered by segment as part of the deliverable?
    Response: No, HCC do not need messaging strategies, (e.g., tag lines) but an understanding of what general messages will resonate.

11. Are their competitive or peer institutions that HCC is interested in gathering perceptual information on?
    Response: Yes, Lone Star and San Jacinto College.

12. There is a wealth of data on workforce development trends that are often used to align programs and courses with labor needs. Does HCC have access to employment data/projections and do they consider this type of information important in framing the research? Is there any expectation on the vendor to conduct secondary research on local workforce development trends?

Response: a) Yes, HCC does have access to this information. b) Any recommendations put forth in the final report should be informed by Labor Market Information /trends. c) No

13. Does HCC have a good understanding already of the problems they are facing and looking for a research based confirmation of those understandings (hypothesis testing) or are the key drivers' unknown and the research is needed to discover the true nature of the issues (more exploratory)?

Response: The research should be more exploratory in nature.

14. Does HCC already have a cohesive communication, marketing, or advertising plan in place to target the "5-8 segments" of interest?

Response: No.

15. What level of access will HCC be able to provide the researcher to any of the subjects of this study: potential students, new/incoming students, current students, graduating/transferring students, withdrawn students?

Response: HCC will be able to provide contact information on these groups.

16. In terms of the scope of the work, is the research to focus on specific low performing Centers of Excellence and Continuing Education Workforce Programs or those centers/programs overall as part of the broader HCC portfolio?

Response: The focus is those centers/programs as part of the broader HCC portfolio. We are interested in the information sources, influences, and drivers that feed enrollment in those programs.

17. Are the three facilitated sessions expected to be presented in-person at HCC?

Response: Yes.

18. Is the nature of the action plans to be determining if new programs need to be added or existing programs need to be retired, or strictly how to improve or optimize existing programs?

Response: Recommendations could be made for any of these scenarios; it should be noted that other data sources besides this market research must be considered before adding or retiring programs. These types of recommendations would be secondary to a discussion of /action plan for COE/program recruitment and marketing.

19. Has any previous research been on this topic in the past? If so, are you able to share the results of that previous work?

Response: None recently.

20. Has Hurricane Harvey changed any of the structure/timeline/questions/goals of this research in any way?

Response: No.

21. Should the supplemental information and attachments, and price proposal all be in a separate section from the main proposal?
    Response: Only price proposal should be in a separate envelope and a separate file on the electronic copy.

22. Does HCC have a current target population/segments it currently markets too? If so, what are they?
    Response: No.

23. Do you anticipate that this research will lead to subsequent communications/marketing RFPs to act on the results of the market research?
    Response: This is a possibility.

24. Can HCC provide lists (including contact information/geography/basic demographics) for current students, non-returning students and admitted students that we will be allowed to contact or will we be responsible for sourcing lists? If yes, please outline which lists will be available to us (e.g., people who took the SAT/ACT, applicants from certain feeder schools) and the approximate number of names are those lists.
    Response: HCC can provide lists of admitted students, current students, and non-returning students. There are over 55,000 current students in a long academic semester; see above for discussion of non-returning students, and typically ~5,500 CEU students.

    Other prospect categories of interest for which HCC may or may not have contact information:
    - *Tested but not enrolled*   *3,525*
    - *Enrolled Fall 2015 but not enrolled Fall 2016*   *10,764*
    - *GED graduate but not enrolled further*   *564*
    - *Financial aid awarded but not enrolled*   *25,060*

25. What other information or sources can HCC provide that can be used for secondary research?
    Response: Primarily what is provided through a typical Student Information System (SIS).

26. What area geographically does HCC consider to be their prospective / service area? Should we only recruit in this area or should we consider potential students outside of this area?
    Response: The focus should be on students in or near the HCC service area. Please see the academic dashboard for the service area.

29. For qualitative coding, do we need to use NVivo software specifically, or can there be something similar?
    Response: You may use similar software, but files must be provided to us in a format in which we can use them. Our current licenses are for NVivo software.

30. The RFP states "what are sources of current enrollment in specific programs" can you clarify what you mean by "sources"?

    Response: HCC is interested in information about the characteristics of students who make up the enrollment. These may be demographic, psychographic, geographic, etc.. We are interested in location based information as well to better understand who is enrolling and what the drivers are behind enrollment decisions.

31. Where is the enrollment coming from?

    Response: Please clarify this question. Per Question #5, HCC does have zip code data for where students reside.

32. Can HCC provide a profile/breakdown of composition of current students, non-returning students, admitted students?

    Response: Yes; this data can be drawn from HCC's Student Information System.

33. When "programs" are mentioned in the RFP, to what specific programs are you referring?

    Response: HCC is interested in enrollment in its academic programs, COEs/workforce degrees, and Continuing Education programs.

34. Which are the key "programs" or target groups that we should consider developing sample size recommendations?

    Response: The sample should be designed to provide information about each COE and the Continuing Education unit.

35. Should we consider high school age students under the age of 18 as potential respondents in this study?

    Response: Only to the extent that they would be one group of prospective students. HCC is not interested in studying the dual credit program at this time.

36. Would HCC be willing to partner with us to send surveys/survey links to potential respondents (e.g., alumni, recent graduates, current students, prospects, etc.) given that HCC affiliation is likely to increase survey participation?

    Response: No

37. Would HCC be willing to allow our researchers onto campus to potentially conduct some of the research among current students or staff on-campus?

    Response: Yes

38. Would HCC provide facilities and incentives? Sometimes public universities are restricted in terms of incentives that can be used to enlist participation, especially among current students.

    Response: Facilities – Yes. Incentives – No, we would expect incentives to be included in the budget for the proposal.

39. Are all classes offered in English only or should we consider doing a specified portion of the survey in Spanish (or other languages) in order to maximize potential student consideration and enrollment possibilities?

    Response: HCC offers a limited number of classes in Spanish. It may be helpful to have a prospect survey in Spanish and one in Vietnamese.

40. Over the past 5 years or so, approximately how many marketing research projects has HCC commissioned with outside research suppliers (if any)? For each, could you indicate: firm used, project purpose/objective, estimated contract cost?
Response: None

41. Based on HCC 2016-17 Fact Book, approximately 63% of enrolled for-credit students are in-district, 24% are from out-of-district (but in TX), and 13% are from out-of-state (including some from outside the US). When assessing needs and decisions among prospective students, is there interest in including prospective students from outside the district OR should the prospective student research initiative focus entirely within the district/service area?
Response: Respondents should focus on students in and near the HCC service area.

42. How many students were admitted and chose not to enroll at HCC for the most recent fall term (2017)?
Response: Admitted but not enrolled—34,629

43. How many students can be considered "non-returning" for the most recent academic year?
Response: See Question #2 above.

44. How does HCC define a "prospect"? Is a prospect a prospective student who has not yet engaged with the college in any way or does it also encompass students who have demonstrated interest in the institution?
Response: Both are included in our definition.

45. How do you define prospective students: enrolled, but not yet registered for any classes?
Response: See Question #44 above

46. How does HCC build and develop prospect lists?
Response: Primarily through online lead capture forms and known groups of potentials such as high school graduates, applied but not enrolled, financial aid awarded but not applied/enrolled, community event leads, etc.

47. Do you have email addresses for prospective students?
Response: In most cases

48. Is there an incumbent for this engagement, or does the HCC engage regularly with a market research firm for its research needs?
Response: We are not currently conducting market research with an outside firm.

49. Can you share the target budget for the study?
Response: Given this is HCC's first market research project in some time, the budget range for this study is $100,000 - $150,000.

50. Surveying of current and non-returning students is mentioned. I wanted to:

    a. Confirm that you can provide lists of these people to us
    Response: Yes, but the research plan should specify inclusion and exclusion criteria.

    b. What type of information (phone, mailing or email) will be available?
    Response: HCC requests all three methods of contact from the students.

    c. Do you have any school policies prohibiting any specific contact methods or research methodologies?
    Response: No; however, HCC must adhere to any federal guidelines that govern this area.

51. Do you have a prospective students list you could share, perhaps people that have requested applications but have not yet applied? If yes, what information do you have on them (mailing address, phone, email)?
    Response: a) HCC has a list of prospective students from an online lead capture form. However, the numbers in that database may not be sufficient for this research (~35,000). HCC also has other lists such as prospects who have applied but not enrolled.
    b) The lead capture form requests email and phone numbers. All three are requested on the application form.

52. Secondary research and internal data is mentioned. I believe this references some data or information you have already gathered. Can you share more about what you have? What data format it is in? What type of analysis you were envisioning?
    Response: a) HCC has the typical information that is included in most student information systems (SIS) including: student addresses, where they have attended, academic history, etc. b) HCC is an Oracle PeopleSoft campus. c) It is likely that HCC would extract data for the awarded vendor, for analysis, rather than permitting access to the entire SIS.

53. An emphasis on stratification by program was discussed. Can you share more about any programs of specific interest?
    Response: Stratification in this sense does not require sampling by program. Rather, HCC expects the vendor to sample by Center of Excellence (COEs)/Continuing Education. HCC is interested in how programs: (a) contribute to enrollment within a COE and (b) may act as drivers in recruitment and retention decisions.

    Background: HCC has both academic and workforce programs. HCC's credit workforce programs are clustered by Center of Excellence, which are geographically headquartered, distributed among the 6 Colleges. We also offer SCH (academic credit) and CEU pathways.

54. We are a federal definition small business, headquartered outside of the state of Texas. Does a federal small business certification for a business outside of the State of Texas receive the same points credit as a small business certification from a business headquartered within the state of Texas?

    Response: No, HCC only recognizes certification from the following governmental and private agencies: Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) SBE Certification, City of Houston SBE, MWPDBE and DBE Certifications, Texas Department of Transportation SBE Certification, City of Austin SBE Certification, South Central Texas Regional Certification Agency SBE Certification, Small Business Administration 8(a).

55. We are a WBENC certified WOSB. WBENC is a certifier for the federal SBA contracting program. I just want to make sure this qualifies us for the proposed small business component.

    Response: Refer to question number 54 for your answer.

56. Do you have any formal working, or informal information sharing, relationship with Centers of Excellence at any other colleges or college systems? I am asking this because of the request for a copy of a report. We have extensive experience with Centers of Excellence at other institutions, some larger than yours, and want to see if you already have a relationship with any of them that would help facilitate report sharing.

    Response: No, the expectation is that the vendor will have experience with multi-campus community college systems rather than COEs.

57. Is a list of the attendees (in person and via phone) from the pre proposal meeting that I attended today available to share?

    Response: Yes, please go to:

    http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/procurement/rfps/bid-title-267419-en.html