



REGULATORY RESEARCH INITIATIVE TO ADVANCE EQUITY

Request for proposals (RFP)
ASWB Member Engagement and Regulatory Services

Deadline: June 30, 2023

(Initial May 31 deadline was extended by the Regulatory Research Team on May 18, 2023.)

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PURPOSE OF THE RFP

ASWB seeks research related to occupational and professional regulation, with an emphasis on social work regulatory best practices. The research will promote best practices and informed decision-making on behalf of social work regulators in the United States and Canada. ASWB is requesting proposals for original qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method research with evaluation on scientific merit. Based on the response to this RFP and project descriptions, it is anticipated that multiple contracts will be awarded.

Areas of focus relating to social work regulation

- The impact licensure has on the social work profession
- Purpose of regulation to mitigate harm
- Supervised practice experience required for licensure
- Entry-to-practice competencies
- Supervisor qualifications and responsibilities
- Professional practice standards
- Continued competence (continuing professional development plans, continuing education, supports to ensure continued safe and effective practice)
- Electronic practice/telehealth/audio-only/all-encompassing modalities and emerging technologies
- Enforcement (complaint receipt/processing, investigation, disciplinary procedures, adjudication, sanctions, remediation, supervision as sanction, recidivism reduction measures, prevention, etc.)
- Impact of licensing exemptions
- Reciprocity, endorsement, compact

Areas of focus relating to the social work licensing exams

ASWB seeks research into the variables associated with the results reported in the recently published analysis of 10 years of licensing exam pass rate data. The research will support the association and the entire social work profession in gaining a deeper understanding of the causes and impacts of various forces on racial disparities and other disparities present within the licensing exam pass rate data.

The research will provide additional context and knowledge to discussions currently taking place about building and maintaining a more diverse and inclusive profession. The association's longtime and ongoing commitment to ensuring the provision of an equitable licensing exam will benefit from this research.

ASWB requires research on the variables associated with the licensing exam pass rate data to determine future steps and areas in need of continued research. Research proposals might address correlating external variables that may influence the disparities in the licensing exam pass rate data. Such variables could include upstream factors such as differences in education programs; considerations of intersectionality, including age,

gender, race, health, socioeconomic status; and social determinants of health, including life experiences from early childhood to post-graduate.

PROGRAM SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) is the nonprofit organization composed of the social work regulatory bodies of all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and all ten Canadian provinces. ASWB's mission is to provide support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection.

ASWB owns and maintains the social work licensing examinations that are used to test a social worker's competence to practice ethically and safely. ASWB also supports its membership in a variety of capacities, including through the provision of research and other information for the development and administration of social work regulation.

The ASWB 2022–2023 Strategic Framework envisions expanding licensure to include all social workers in order to protect clients and client systems. Under this framework, ASWB is committed to maintaining the licensing examination program as a central focus.

The research being requested in this RFP is one action among many ASWB is implementing toward achieving this goal; current and future efforts focus on continuing to ensure equitable means of measuring competence. Current funded research initiatives include gathering qualitative data from test-takers on their experiences through ASWB's community conversations and through test-taker feedback on a test mastery mindset program. In addition, ASWB is exploring alternative types of assessment with its third-party testing industry experts.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

All proposals received on or before the proposal due date and time and at the location specified in the request for proposals will be evaluated to determine whether they meet the minimum qualification requirements set forth in this request for proposals as follows:

Organizational access

The successful bidder must have a means of accessing the relevant research and technical publications from appropriate sources. The successful bidder must also have the means to conduct any proposed studies/research efforts.

Researcher qualifications

The successful bidder must have the educational background, knowledge, and skills necessary to successfully complete the proposed project. The successful bidder must be able to discern the difference between primary and secondary sources in research. Additionally, the successful bidder must be able to evaluate existing literature around the topic including experimental design, data collection, and validity of conclusions drawn. The successful bidder must also be able to access relevant data, organize, and conduct proposed studies, and be able to present the findings in a cohesive narrative piece.

Communication skills

The successful bidder must be able to communicate the results of this study in a well-written manuscript with comprehensive bibliographic citations, suitable for publishing (in English). The successful bidder may also be asked to present a summary of the results at a future ASWB event.

Budget

A detailed project budget including tasks, a timeline, and a schedule for deliverables must be included with the proposal. A specific budget cap has not been established for this project; ample financial resources have been allotted because of the importance of this project to ASWB's strategic objectives. Proposals and projected expenses will be considered and evaluated based on the overall strength of the proposal, including intellectual merit and project design.

DELIVERABLES

- A research plan and outline for review and feedback
- Periodic progress reports
- A comprehensive list of all research and grey literature evaluated
- Any data/results/conclusions gathered from the study
- A manuscript or an article* suitable for publication that summarizes the work and its relevance and applicability to ensuring equitable means of measuring competency are being utilized in the social work profession
- Other documents/data that will be established in the contract

*All research documents submitted to ASWB remain the property of the successful bidder; however, the successful bidder shall enter into an agreement with ASWB regarding publication and presentation of the product, disbursement of funds, and ASWB access to research data.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. EDT on Wednesday, May 31, 2023.

Responses must address all program components and include the following four sections:

Program plan/narrative

The narrative must be a clear and concise description of the bidder's overall program content, program design, scope of services, ability to perform all required services, and a comprehensive work plan. The narrative should show that the bidder has a clear understanding of the needs identified in this RFP and demonstrate how the program plan will meet the RFP's goals and objectives. Bidders must provide a detailed description of the methodology for accomplishing the tasks in this RFP, including how non-English citations are to be reviewed. As part of the work plan, proposals must include at a minimum:

- Proposed timeline or schedule
- Tasks and subtasks
- Schedule for deliverables
- Key personnel involved in implementation

Organizational capacity

The organizational capacity section should demonstrate adequate human, organizational, and technical resources, as well as the professional ability to meet the needs of this RFP. The organizational description must include, at a minimum:

Resumes or curriculum vitae of key personnel

An explanation of how the provider's internal monitoring system adheres to generally accepted accounting principles

Demonstrated effectiveness

Proposals must include a description of all prior experience in the provision of these or similar services. At a minimum, this description should include the background and experience of the bidder in providing these services.

Budget

Proposals must include a detailed budget that stipulates how funds will be spent, including direct costs, salaries, wages and benefits, administration and overhead (if applicable), contractor costs, materials and supplies, and travel (if applicable).

PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCEDURES

A diverse and impartial committee will review all proposals submitted on time to determine whether bidders meet all the requirements prescribed in the RFP. The evaluators may contact any individual or entity, whether offered as reference or not, to obtain information that will assist in evaluating the bidder. The evaluators retain the right to use such information to make selection decisions. Submittal of a proposal constitutes agreement that the evaluators may obtain and utilize such information.

Evaluation criteria

| Response categories | Characteristics |
|----------------------------|---|
| Program plan/Narrative | Methodology, program design, scope timeline, ability to perform all required services, and innovative elements |
| Organizational capacity | Evidence of adequate resources (human, organizational, and technical) and professional ability to meet requested services |
| Demonstrated effectiveness | Evidence of prior successful experiences in the provision of services |
| Budget | Budget plan, including project tasks, timeline, and a schedule of deliverables; reasonableness of total cost; and comparison with other proposals |

The evaluators may request oral presentation or discussions with any or all bidders for the purpose of clarification or to amplify the material presented in any part of the proposal. However, bidders are cautioned that this provision is not mandatory; therefore, all proposals should be complete, concise, and reflect the most favorable terms available from the bidder.

The chosen bidder(s) will be notified in writing of their winning proposal(s), and a contract will be drawn that will include reference to this RFP, its attachments and addenda, the winning proposal(s), and any additional contract language that may be required by ASWB or by law. All other bidders will be notified regarding the selection of the winning proposal(s).

PROPOSAL PACKAGE FORMAT/SUBMISSION DETAILS

Cover letter. Bidders shall submit a cover letter transmitting the proposal package to ASWB. The cover letter shall be signed and dated by an authorized individual representing the bidder's organization.

File format and type. Bidders shall submit proposals as a Word document. Proposal text shall be in a font size of no less than 12 points, with not less than a one-inch margin on all pages, in order to facilitate the proposal review process. All pages must be consecutively numbered. Attachments and appendices do not need to be consecutively numbered from the main body of the proposal as long as any referenced attachment or appendix pages are easy to locate and the pages within each attachment or appendix are consecutively numbered.

Contents page. Bidders shall include a contents page with page numbers. Proposals are not page limited; however, applicants are encouraged to be concise while providing sufficient detail to convey their ability to undertake the proposed research.

Proprietary content. The contents of any proposal are considered proprietary to ASWB and the respective bidder. All bidders agree not to discuss their proposal with any other parties, including competitors, at any time.

Costs. Any costs incurred by the bidder in the preparation, transmittal, and presentation of any proposal or material submitted in response to this RFP shall be borne solely by the bidder.

Revised proposals. Any bidder may submit a revised proposal before the due date. Such revised proposals must be complete replacements for a previously submitted proposal and must be clearly identified as such in the cover letter.

Withdrawal. Bidders will be allowed to withdraw their proposals at any time prior to the proposal submission deadline. To withdraw, bidders shall email a withdrawal notice signed by the bidder's duly authorized representative to jhenkel@aswb.org.

Time frame. Responses to this RFP, including negotiated costs, will be considered firm for 180 days after the due date for the receipt of proposals.

Questions. Please email questions about the proposal requirements to Jennifer Henkel, ASWB Senior Director of Member Engagement and Regulatory Services at jhenkel@aswb.org.

Please submit the entire proposal package in one email to jhenkel@aswb.org.