

# STEM TALENT CHALLENGE PROGRAM

*Notice of Funding Opportunity*

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U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

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*Office of INNOVATION and*  
**ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

## Executive Summary

<b>Federal Awarding Agency Name</b>	U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce
<b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>	FY 2020 STEM Talent Challenge Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
<b>Announcement Type</b>	This NOFO publishes EDA's application submission requirements and review procedures for applications received for the STEM Talent Challenge, authorized by Section 28 of the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980, as amended, 15 U.S.C. § 3723. Effective date: 8/27/2020
<b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>	EDA-HDQ-OIE-2020-STEMTALENT
<b>Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s)</b>	11.023 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Talent Challenge Program
<b>Key Dates</b>	The deadline for receipt of applications is <b>11:59 P.M. EASTERN TIME ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2020</b> . Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered. Applications will only be accepted electronically through <a href="http://www.grants.gov">www.grants.gov</a> (Grants.gov). Applicants are advised to read carefully the application and submission information provided in Section D (p. 6) of this NOFO.
<b>Funding Opportunity Description</b>	EDA is seeking applications from eligible applicants to create and implement innovative science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) apprenticeship models that complement their respective region's innovation economy. The STEM Talent Challenge seeks to develop or expand regional workforce capacity to support high-growth, high-wage entrepreneurial ventures, industries of the future (which usually includes industries that leverage emerging technologies), and other innovation-driven businesses that have a high likelihood of accelerating economic competitiveness and job creation in their respective regions and in the United States.
<b>Cost Sharing and Matching</b>	Applicants must provide matching non-Federal Share equal to at least 50 percent of the total project cost; i.e., applicants must match each dollar requested with at least one dollar of applicant match. See Section C.2 (p.5) of this NOFO
<b>Eligible Applicants</b>	Eligible applicants for EDA financial assistance under this NOFO include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A State;</li> <li>• An Indian tribe;</li> <li>• A city or other political subdivision of a State;</li> <li>• An entity that is— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· a nonprofit organization,</li> <li>· an institution of higher education,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· a public-private partnership,</li> <li>· a science or research park,</li> <li>· a Federal laboratory,</li> <li>· an economic development organization or similar entity;</li> </ul> <p>and has an application that is supported by a State, a political subdivision of a State, or a native organization; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A consortium of any of the eligible applicants listed above.</li> </ul> <p>EDA is not authorized to provide assistance to individuals under this Program. Applications from individuals will not be considered for funding.</p>
<b>Informational Webinar</b>	EDA plans to conduct an informational webinar for STEM Talent Challenge and expects to make available scheduling information and a link to a recording at <a href="http://www.eda.gov/oie/">http://www.eda.gov/oie/</a> .
<b>Award Notification</b>	Subject to the availability of funding, successful applicants should expect to receive award notification approximately 90 - 120 days from the application deadline set forth in this NOFO.

**Full Announcement Text  
2020 STEM Talent Challenge Program**

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## A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### 1. Overview and Background

EDA's Office of Innovation & Entrepreneurship is committed to furthering technology-based economic development initiatives that accelerate high-quality job growth, create more economic opportunities, and support the future of the next generation of industry-leading companies. To advance these goals, EDA awards grants through the Build to Scale Program to develop and support regional innovation initiatives that help to build regional economies through scalable, technology-driven startups as described in the EDA-administered portions of Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980 (15 U.S.C. § 3720-3723) (Stevenson-Wydler).

As these regional innovation initiatives scale across the country, America has benefited from growth in jobs requiring sophisticated science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills. High-skilled human capital is proving essential to the growth and expansion of these regional technological ecosystems; however, U.S. employers have struggled to fill jobs in these fields, and younger or leaner firms, like many innovative startups, are especially hard hit by this challenge. An increasing number of jobs that require STEM skills do not require a bachelor's degree, and other education and training pathways – such as apprenticeships, fellowships, and other work-based learning models – are becoming instrumental in meeting the urgent demand for a STEM-capable workforce.

To meet these demands, Section 28 of Stevenson-Wydler (15 U.S.C. § 3723), authorizes EDA to carry out a grant program to identify and develop strategies that support the growth of STEM talent development programs, and to implement those programs where plans and strategies exist.

### 2. Program Information

#### STEM Talent Challenge

The STEM Talent Challenge *aims to increase STEM talent and workforce readiness to strengthen regional innovation economies*. This competition seeks applications from eligible applicants that are creating and implementing STEM talent development strategies that complement their respective region's innovation economy, particularly as they relate to emerging, transformative sectors and future industries such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, advanced manufacturing and robotics, space exploration and commerce, bioscience, quantum information science, and aqua- and agricultural technologies.

The STEM Talent Challenge is designed to help communities with two activities – planning and development, and program implementation. A total of \$2 million has been appropriated for this program and EDA invites applications that maximize impacts across both activities within this program, though planning and development activities are optional. **Applicants may not request in excess of \$300,000 over an 18 to 24-month period of performance, of which no more than \$50,000 may support planning and development activities if such support is needed.**

### **If applicable, for Planning and Development activities:**

- Applicants should plan and develop an implementation strategy to address the unmet needs and existing barriers for regional STEM-capable workforces, through competency-based work-and-learn models across the continuum ranging from externships, to fellowships, internships, cooperative education, and apprenticeships. Applicants are encouraged to experiment and innovate. In general, planning and development should be complete within the first 6 months of award.
- Strategies should be tied to a regional economy's unique, competitive strengths and shared infrastructure as well as to clearly articulated labor market challenges demonstrated through a rigorous needs analysis
- *As noted above, planning and development activities are encouraged if no such plans currently exist, but are an optional component of the proposed project.*

### **For Program Implementation activities:**

- Applicants should implement a new or expand an existing STEM competency-based work-and-learn education and training models that may result in nationally-recognized, portable and/or stackable credentials. Experimentation and innovation are encouraged.
- Training should prioritize STEM skills tied to the use of emerging, transformative sectors and the needs of future industries as described on p.1 of the STEM Talent Challenge Program Information.
- Training models should include on-the-job training at an employer in addition to classroom, remote, online, or blended learning, but can follow any existing or newly developed work-and-learn model; experimentation is encouraged.
- Applicants should leverage partnerships with local and regional innovation leaders, including technology centers, business accelerators, community colleges, and STEM industry leaders such as technology startups, advanced manufacturers, life science businesses, and other similar entities.

### **Example Activities**

The STEM Talent Challenge will provide funding to develop, implement, and expand new work-and-learn models to increase the STEM-capable workforce across the nation's growing regional innovation economies. Competitive applications will clearly communicate how they will develop or expand regional STEM workforce capacity to support high-growth, high-wage entrepreneurial ventures, industries of the future, and other innovation-driven businesses, and how they will accelerate economic competitiveness and job creation in their respective regions and in the United States.

Projects should aim to identify opportunities in high-growth potential sectors, and to expand and empower the innovation economy workforce, including by:

- Engaging regional entrepreneurs, innovators, and the organizations that support them to assess and forecast current and future talent needs and to develop collaborative solutions with work-based programs;

- Connecting highly skilled talent to highly technical opportunities that foster professional development and provide continuing advanced skills training to develop the technical and scientific workforce that entrepreneurs need; and
- Strengthening collaboration among entrepreneurs, industry leaders and employers, educational organizations, established corporations, and the public sector to enable better access to skilled workers and to develop demand-driven workforce pipelines for the innovation economy.

Applicants should demonstrate how they will leverage regional strengths, capabilities, and competitive advantages and should avoid the duplication of already existing initiatives within the applicant's organization or by other organizations or consortia in the relevant region.

### **Desired Outputs and Outcomes**

Proposed projects may aim for some or all of the following outputs and outcomes or others, as appropriate, considering each proposed project's regional, sectoral, and economic contexts.

#### *A. STEM Work-Based Learning and Training*

Projects should focus on an interdisciplinary approach and utilize training models that provide workers with the experiences and skills they will need to succeed on-the-job and in real-world applications. These may include, but are not limited to, innovative industry-driven apprenticeships, fellowships, internships, and other cooperative employer-educator partnerships, and are not limited to existing industry definitions – experimentation and innovation is encouraged. While important to the development of a future workforce, general education programs such as those found in K-12 curriculums are not encouraged, unless part of a broader strategy in a STEM readiness program.

#### *B. Increase Regional Innovation Capacity*

Projects should focus on connecting regional innovation stakeholders and employers with the workforce and talent development leaders of the region, or training providers who are readying tomorrow's workforce. Programs should emphasize enabling the region's fast-paced technology startups and innovative companies to hire locally and decrease their costs and lead time to filling positions, allowing them to grow their teams and scale their businesses faster. Traditional workforce development programs may not have the expertise or networks to accomplish this – organizations that normally do not identify as workforce development organizations, but are driving regional innovation through worker training are encouraged to apply. These may include, but are not limited to eligible applicants that are business accelerators and incubators, digital economy training organizations, and venture development organizations. Please see Section C (p. 5) of this NOFO for eligibility information regarding the STEM Talent Challenge.

#### *C. Increase Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in STEM*

Projects should focus on enabling all members of a community to have equitable access to and participate in the innovation economy. Talent development programs should prioritize forging new and reinforcing existing relationships among an inclusive group of regional stakeholders, especially those who are underrepresented or historically underserved, including across socioeconomic and geographic categories.

#### *D. Build Computational Expertise for the Digital Economy*

Digital tools and the internet have profoundly transformed the economy and our approach to learning. The COVID-19 global pandemic has accelerated these trends, and as such, a talent pool with computational literacy is imperative to remain globally competitive. In an increasingly virtual and remote world, these skills are essential to diversify economies and to adapt to rapidly transforming places of work and education. Examples of this could involve digital and cloud platforms to increase collaboration, teaching and training, customizable individual instruction in computer science or adjacent fields, as well as virtual reality or simulation-based training activities.

### **3. Statutory Authority for the STEM Talent Challenge**

The statutory authority for the STEM Talent Challenge is Section 28 of Stevenson-Wylder (15 U.S.C. § 3723).

## **B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

### **1. Available Funding Under this Announcement**

Funding in the amount of \$2,000,000 has been appropriated for grants made under the STEM Talent Challenge pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020.<sup>1</sup> The funding periods and funding amounts referenced in this notice are subject to the availability of funds at the time of award as well as to U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and EDA priorities at the time of award. DOC and EDA will not be held responsible for application preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not obligate DOC or EDA to make any specific grant award or to obligate all or any part of available funds.

The maximum Federal Share of each STEM Talent Challenge award is \$300,000, of which no more than \$50,000 may be allocated to planning and development activities if needed. All other funds requested must be dedicated to program implementation. If not conducting planning and development activities, applicants may request the full \$300,000 for program implementation.

### **2. Type of Funding Instrument Used; Period of Performance**

Under this NOFO, EDA may award grants to eligible applicants to support project activities. Periods of performance are dependent on the type of project and the scope of work of the grant award. See Section F (p. 18) of this NOFO for award notification information. Anticipated awards typically will have a period of performance of approximately 18 to 24 months with an estimated start date about 45 days after the date on which EDA makes the award.

EDA expects all projects to proceed efficiently and expeditiously, and EDA expects applicants to document clearly in their applications a reasonable and appropriate timeline that includes the start and completion dates of the proposed scope of work. As a condition of their respective award, recipients will be required to provide timely periodic progress reports and performance data as set forth in Section F (p. 19).

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<sup>1</sup> Pub. L. No. 116-93, Title 1 of Division B, 133 Stat. 2317 at 2387 (December 20, 2019).



## C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### 1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applications for and eligible recipients of EDA investment assistance under this NOFO include:

- a State;
- an Indian tribe;
- a city or other political subdivision of a State;
- an entity that is—
  - a nonprofit organization;
  - an institution of higher education;
  - a public-private partnership;<sup>2</sup>
  - a science or research park;
  - a Federal laboratory;
  - an economic development organization or similar entity;<sup>3</sup>and that has an application supported by a State, a political subdivision of a State, or a native organization; or
- a consortium of any of the above-mentioned eligible applicants.

EDA is **not** authorized to provide assistance to individuals under this NOFO, and such requests will not be considered for funding.

### 2. Cost Sharing or Matching

The minimum required match for the STEM Talent Challenge is 1:1. Applicants must demonstrate AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION a matching non-Federal Share of at least 50 percent of the total project cost i.e., for every dollar of Federal funds requested, applicants must demonstrate a commitment of at least one dollar of matching share.

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<sup>2</sup> For purposes of the STEM Talent Challenge, EDA defines a public-private partnership as a relationship formalized by contractual agreement between a public agency and a private-sector entity that reasonably defines the terms of collaboration in the delivery and financing of a public project. EDA will typically review agreements for items such as the purpose and objectives of the partnership, the binding/contractual nature of the relationship, the duties and responsibilities of each party, and the duration of the agreement. The scope of the relationship documented in the agreement may be limited to the proposal set forth in a given partnership's grant application or may encompass a broader program, initiative, or other set of activities or goals. A letter of support from a public entity alone, without additional documentation demonstrating a formal, binding relationship between the parties, will be found insufficient to establish eligibility under this entity category. EDA reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to establish eligibility, as necessary. Applicants that have further questions concerning these documentation requirements should contact the representative listed in Section G (p. 20) of the NOFO.

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of the STEM Talent Challenge, EDA defines an economic development organization as an organization whose primary purpose is to support the economic development of a community or region. In order to demonstrate eligibility status under this category, EDA will look to the organization's Articles of Incorporation, Charter, Resolutions, Bylaws, and/or other documents that may be relevant to establish the primary purpose of the organization. Applicants are encouraged to submit all relevant documentation to EDA for evaluation. EDA reserves the right to request additional information from applicants to establish eligibility, as necessary. If applicants have further questions concerning these documentation requirements, they should contact the representative listed in Section G (p. 20) of the NOFO.

Applications must show, by submitting from each source organization providing matching non-Federal Share, a commitment letter or equivalent document signed by an authorized representative of that organization, that matching share will, at the time of award:

- be committed to the project for the period of performance,
- be available as needed, and
- not be conditioned or encumbered in any way that may preclude its use consistent with the requirements of EDA investment assistance.

#### **a. In-Kind Matching Share**

In-kind contributions may be used for the required matching non-Federal Share and must consist of contributions directly related to the proposed project, such as services, equipment,<sup>4</sup> or space. EDA will evaluate all in-kind contributions, which must be eligible project costs and meet applicable Federal cost principles and uniform administrative requirements.<sup>5</sup> Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with the appropriate EDA representative listed in Section G of this NOFO to determine how in-kind contributions may be utilized to satisfy the matching non-Federal Share requirement based upon the project concept and how those in-kind contributions may be valued.

#### **b. Certain Specific Matching Non-Federal Share Restrictions**

Please note that all project funds—both Federal funds and matching funds—are subject to certain restrictions. **NEITHER FEDERAL NOR MATCHING SHARE FUNDS CAN INCLUDE FUNDS TO BE INVESTED IN STARTUPS OR OTHER COMPANIES, whether through equity, debt, or hybrid mechanisms.**

### **D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

#### **1. Address to Request Application**

An applicant may obtain the appropriate application electronically at <https://www.grants.gov/> (Grants.gov). Applicants may search for this funding opportunity on Grants.gov using Funding Opportunity Number “**EDA-HDQ-OIE-2020-STEMTALENT.**” All components of the appropriate application may be accessed and downloaded via <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>. The preferred electronic file format for attachments is Adobe portable document format (PDF) and, where appropriate, Microsoft Excel; however, EDA will also accept Microsoft Word-formatted electronic files.

Applicants are advised that they must complete the registration process prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov. Even though an applicant may be able to view and download an application, if the applicant has not correctly completed the Grants.gov registration process, the applicant will not be able to submit the application electronically for EDA’s review. See Section D.8.a (p.14) and H.8 (p. 22) for details of the Grants.gov registration process.

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<sup>4</sup> The purchase of equipment and equipment-related modifications or renovations of a facility may be eligible, but only to the extent that such equipment and any related modifications or renovations are used to support another eligible activity.

<sup>5</sup> See 2 CFR § 200.306.

## 2. Content and Form of Submission

In order to be considered for funding, applicants must submit a complete application package by the applicable deadline. A complete application includes **all required documents as set forth below**. All documentation and data submitted as part of the application should be current as of the date of application submission. Throughout the review and selection process, EDA, at its sole discretion, may request from applicants written clarification or corrected or missing documents and require that applicants provide such clarifications or corrections in order to continue to be considered for an award under this NOFO. EDA will provide applicants a reasonable amount of time to provide any additional documentation. Failure to provide complete and accurate supporting documentation in a timely manner when requested by EDA may result in the rejection of your application. Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. All application forms submitted through Grants.gov must be signed electronically by an **Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR)**; see Section D.8.b (p. 15) of this NOFO for information on AOR requirements.

To be considered complete, an application must consist of:

- All required forms as listed in Section D.2.a (p. 7).;
- Proposal materials, which include the Project Narrative, Budget Narrative and Staffing Plan, Matching Non-Federal Share Commitment Letters, and State/Local Government Support<sup>6</sup> as outlined in Section D.2.b. (p. 8); and
- Addenda to the Proposal materials as listed in Section D.2.c (p. 10).

Applications that do not contain all required forms listed in each part or that fail to adhere to the instructions in this NOFO, may be considered incomplete and may not be considered for funding. Additional application materials not requested under this NOFO will not be reviewed or evaluated.

Applicants are advised to carefully read the instructions contained in this NOFO and in all forms contained in the application. It is the sole responsibility of each applicant to ensure that a complete application is received by EDA.

### a. Required Forms

All applicants must include the following documents at the time of application submission. The documents should be uploaded as separate Adobe PDF files. All application forms listed in this section will be available in the Grants.gov application.

- One **Form SF-424** (Application for Federal Assistance) from each applicant or co-applicant, as applicable.
- One **Form SF-424A** (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs) per project.
- One **Form SF-424B** (Assurances – Non-Construction Programs) from each applicant or co-applicant, as applicable.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Only certain types of eligible entities are required to provide documentation of support from relevant States or political subdivisions thereof. See Section D.2.b.iv (p. 10).

<sup>7</sup> Submission of Form SF-424B is not required if the applicant has already completed the assurances for non-construction programs as part of the registration process for SAM.gov.

- One **Form CD-511** (Certification Regarding Lobbying) from each applicant or co-applicant, as applicable.
- One **Form SF-LLL** (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities) from each applicant or co-applicant, if the applicant or co-applicant, as applicable, has lobbying activities to disclose. If there are no lobbying activities to disclose, submission of Form SF-LLL is not required.

## b. Proposal

The proposal must clearly articulate the overall goals of the project, the specific and distinct Scopes of Work and concrete activities that will be accomplished under it, specifically delineating between planning and development activities (if applicable), and program implementation activities. The proposal must also demonstrate each applicant's capability to implement the proposed activities in accordance with the requirements of this NOFO. Applications will be evaluated based on the Evaluation Criteria outlined in Section E.1 (p. 15). **Applicants should carefully adhere to the page limits specified for each section of the proposal.** Pages beyond the specified page limit for each section may not be read or considered.

### i. Project Narrative

The Project Narrative should address all activities that will be undertaken using the funds requested under this NOFO and a summary of how these activities support the overall project's goals. The Project Narrative may not exceed **10-single sided, 8.5x11-inch pages, with a minimum 12-point font and 1-inch margins**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a clear and concise narrative that includes a compelling justification for the project and articulates a clearly defined regional STEM talent gap, how the proposed project will uniquely meet this need, and the expected outcome(s) that will result from the proposed project. A competitive application will contain the following elements in the Project Narrative:

- An **executive summary** that includes the *project title*, identifies *the name of the applicant* as well as the *type of eligible applicant* listed in Section C.1 (p. 5) of this NOFO (including if the applicant is a public-private partnership), and provides a *project summary* of no more than 250 words (note: the executive summary may be published on EDA's website and via press release if your application is selected for funding);
- A description of the project's **location and region** including its primary service area, a description of the communities or regions served (e.g., assets, financial and business resources, workforce, and infrastructure), and the community's or region's needs and opportunities. The location and region should directly correspond to Questions 14 and 16 on Form SF-424. If the applicant expects impacts beyond the noted region, the applicant should note the region of expected impact. Additionally, applicants must identify their proposed primary service area(s) by county or counties. **Counties should be identified by both name and 5-digit FIPS code.** See <https://www.census.gov/library/reference/code-lists/ansi.html>. This description should not exceed two pages;
- A **description of the proposed project**, including a clear statement of its *purpose*, the roles of each applicant's *key personnel*, the project's *essential partners*, and an *outreach and engagement plan*;
- A **scope of work** of no more than one page linked to the project's purpose and *key milestones*, including *deliverables*;

- A **project timeline** including an estimated *project start date*, *key milestones* with expected completion dates, and an *estimated project completion date*;
- Evidence-and-data-based **anticipated impacts**, including *outputs and outcomes*, *metrics*, and *tracking mechanisms*; and
- A **sustainability plan**, including *anticipated challenges*, *potential barriers*, and a forecast of *post-award period operations*.

## ii. Budget Narrative and Staffing Plan

All applicants must provide a Budget Narrative that may not exceed **4-single sided, 8.5x11-inch pages, with a minimum 12-point font and 1-inch margins**. Applicants must provide a clear Budget Narrative that identifies and justifies how funds in each line item of the budget will be used to support the proposed project and that links each line item to its relevant matching non-Federal Share commitment letter. The Budget Narrative should specifically address each budget line item (including both the Federal Share and matching non-Federal Share) and the narrative total should match the total project costs listed in both Form SF-424, Question 18, Line g (“TOTAL”) and the appropriate totals fields of Form SF-424A. The Budget Narrative should include itemized valuations of any in-kind matching funds (which, for personnel costs, should be supported by the Staffing Plan). Each line item in the budget narrative should clearly indicate:

- A description of the intended use of funds for each line item;
- The budget category (using the categories from Form SF-424A) to which the line item corresponds;
- The Federal Share allocated to the line item;
- The matching non-Federal Share allocated to the line item; and
- If any in-kind matching non-Federal Share is allocated to a given line item, a citation to the one or more commitment letters that documents the commitment of resources.

The matching non-Federal Share, whether in cash or in-kind, is expected to be paid out at the same general rate as the Federal Share; however, if the applicant’s Budget Narrative proposes otherwise, applicants must also include information that clearly indicates what project elements the matching non-Federal Share funds will support and explain why deviation from paying out at the same general rate is required for the project to be implemented.

As part of the Budget Narrative, applicants must also submit a Staffing Plan that lists all positions that would be charged to the Federal and matching non-Federal portions of the budget for each year of the period of performance. The Staffing Plan must include position titles, maximum annual salaries, percentage of time dedicated to the project, and the total amount of annual salaries that would be charged to the project. The total amount of annual salaries that would be charged to the project must be consistent with the amount reflected on the “Personnel” budget line item on the Form SF-424A for each project year.

## iii. Matching Non-Federal Share Commitment Letters

Applicants must submit commitment letters or equivalent documents that demonstrate that all **matching non-Federal funds** (whether cash or in-kind) from all sources (i.e., any applicant, any co-applicants, and any other sources of matching funds) referenced in this application will be **unencumbered, unrestricted,**

and committed at the time of award and that are signed by authorized representatives<sup>8</sup> of the sources of the matching funds.

#### **iv. State/Local Government, Native Organization Support**

If the applicant is a nonprofit organization, an institution of higher education, a public-private partnership, a science or research park, a Federal laboratory, or an economic development organization or similar entity, the applicant must submit one or more resolutions or letters that demonstrate that the application is supported by one or more States, political subdivisions of States (e.g., counties, municipalities), or native organizations that encompass all or a substantial portion of the region served by this project.

**Support from Federal officials, including but not limited to members of the United States Congress, does not meet this requirement.** Examples of authorities that may indicate such support include State and local executive branch officials (e.g., State governors, State cabinet members, mayors or other municipal executives), State and local legislators (e.g., State legislators, city councilpersons), or Regional Tribal Organizations. If, however, the applicant or co-applicant is a State, an Indian tribe, or a city or other political subdivision of a State, this requirement does not apply.

#### **c. Addenda to the Proposal**

Applicants must also submit the following Addenda to the proposal in PDF format. Applications that do not include the required Addenda may be considered incomplete and/or non-responsive and may not be reviewed.

##### **i. Additional Requirements for Non-Profit and For-Profit Organizations**

In addition to all applicable items listed above, eligible applicants that are non-profit or for-profit organizations must submit the following:

- A certificate of good standing from the State of its incorporation that is less than twelve months old;
- A copy of the organization's Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws; and
- For non-profit organizations, a copy of the most recent (not older than 18 months) IRS Form 990 (Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax) (without attachments or schedules).

##### **ii. Indirect Cost Rate Documentation**

If indirect costs are included in the budget, the applicant must include documentation to support the indirect cost rate they are using. The applicant must submit a copy of their current, approved, and negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). The maximum dollar amount of allocable indirect costs for which EDA will reimburse a recipient shall be the lesser of the (i) line-item amount for the Federal share of indirect costs contained in the EDA approved budget for the award, or (ii) Federal share of the total allocable indirect costs of the award based on either (a) the indirect cost rate approved by EDA (or applicable cognizant Federal agency), provided that the cost rate is current at the time the costs were incurred and provided that the rate is approved on or before the award end date, or (b) other acceptable documentation as indicated below.

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<sup>8</sup> Authorized representatives must have the authority to execute documents and to obligate and expend funds on behalf of their respective organizations.

If the applicant does not have a current or pending NICRA, it may propose indirect costs in its budget; however, the applicant must prepare and submit an allocation plan and rate proposal for approval within ninety days from the award start date. See 2 CFR part 200 Apps. III, IV, V, VI, VII for guidance. The allocation plan and the rate proposal shall be submitted to EDA’s Office of Regional Affairs (or applicable cognizant Federal agency). The applicant should include a statement in its Budget Narrative that it does not have a current or pending NICRA and will submit an allocation plan and rate proposal to EDA or the applicant’s cognizant Federal agency for approval.

If the applicant (1) does not have a current NICRA and (2) has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, the applicant may elect to charge a *de minimis* rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs subject to the exceptions of 2 CFR § 200.414(f). The applicant should include a statement in its Budget Narrative that it does not have a NICRA; it has never received an ICR; and it is electing to charge the *de minimis* rate.

Note that if the applicant is a state or local unit of government (or an Indian tribe) that receives less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding per year it may submit any of the following:

- A Certificate of Indirect Costs from the Department of the Interior (DOI) or EDA;
- Acknowledgment received from EDA and Certificate of Indirect Costs;
- Cost Allocation Plan approved by a Federal agency; or
- NICRA.

**d. Application Checklist**

Before you submit your application to EDA, please ensure that the following documents are included in your submission.

<input type="checkbox"/> All required forms (Forms SF424, SF424A, SF424B, CD511, and SFLLL, as applicable) <sup>9</sup>
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Narrative (may not exceed <b>10-single sided, 8.5x11-inch pages, with a minimum 12-point font and 1-inch margins</b> )
<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Narrative and Staffing Plan (may not exceed <b>4-single sided, 8.5x11-inch pages, with a minimum 12-point font and 1-inch margins</b> )
<input type="checkbox"/> Matching Share Commitment Letters
<input type="checkbox"/> State/Local Government Support
<input type="checkbox"/> Addenda (including non-profit or for-profit requirements, if applicable; and a copy of a current, approved indirect cost rate agreement, if applicable)

<sup>9</sup> This includes separate copies of each of these forms, as applicable, for co-applicants. Form SF-LLL is only required if the applicant has retained a lobbyist in conjunction with seeking federal assistance under this funding opportunity.

### 3. Environmental and Historic Preservation Requirements

Applications will be reviewed by EDA in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), depending on the nature and specific elements of each given application. During the NEPA review process, applicants may be instructed to contact the designated State and/or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO/THPO), provide approvals from other governmental agencies, or provide more detailed environmental information. EDA, after compliance with requirements for consultation with Federally-recognized Tribes, may require applicants to participate in Tribal consultation, as necessary. The implementing regulations of NEPA require EDA to provide public notice of the availability of project-specific environmental documents, such as environmental impact statements, environmental assessments, findings of no significant impact, and records of decision, to the affected public.<sup>10</sup>

### 4. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, applicants are required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. EDA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the EDA is ready to make an award, EDA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant. Recipients will be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR parts 25 and 170. The guidance set out at 2 CFR part 25 may be located at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2019-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2019-title2-vol1-part25.pdf>, and the guidance set out at 2 CFR part 170 may be located at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2019-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2019-title2-vol1-part170.pdf>. Note that SAM now encompasses the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) and that **the unique entity identifier is commonly referred to as the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number**.

### 5. Submission Dates and Times

The closing date and time for receipt of applications for funding under this NOFO is **11:59 P.M. EASTERN TIME** on **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2020** (the "Application Deadline").

Applications submitted electronically via <https://www.grants.gov/> (Grants.gov) must be received by the Application Deadline. The date and time that an application will be deemed to be electronically received will be determined in accordance with the electronic submission instructions provided at Grants.gov. See Section D.8 (p 14) and H (p. 20) of this NOFO for information regarding electronic submissions. **Applications received after the Application Deadline will not be considered for funding.**

In addition, please note the following:

- EDA will not accept any unsolicited changes, additions, revisions, or deletions to applications after the submission deadline.

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<sup>10</sup> As specified in 40 CFR § 1506.6(b).



- Throughout the review and selection process, EDA reserves the right to seek clarification from applicants whose applications are being reviewed and considered.
- Applicants may be asked to clarify objectives and work plans and modify budgets or other specifics as necessary to comply with Federal requirements and provide supplemental information required by the agency before award.

**Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not to wait until near the application deadline before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting an application through Grants.gov.**

#### **a. How to Submit an Application**

Applicants are required to submit applications electronically in accordance with the instructions provided at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). EDA will not accept paper (hard copy), facsimile or email transmissions of applications.

Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). If problems occur, the applicant is advised to (a) print any error message received; and (b) call the [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for assistance. The Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (except for Federal holidays). Applicants can also contact Grants.gov via email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

EDA, in its sole discretion, may pre-approve in writing submission via an alternate method (e.g., email) due to a systems issue at Grants.gov only insofar as any such systems issue is beyond the control of the applicant. However, any submission via this alternate method must be received before the deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted for any reason**, including but not limited to late submissions caused by issues with Grants.gov, SAM, or AOR registration.

In situations described in this subsection, applications must have email receipt timestamps no later than the Application Deadline or must be postmarked or the equivalent on or before the Application Deadline. **An application that is not timestamped by the Application Deadline will not be reviewed.**

#### **6. Intergovernmental Review**

Applications submitted under this NOFO are subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs,” if a State has adopted a process under Executive Order 12372 to review and coordinate proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development (commonly referred to as the “single point of contact review process”). All applicants that are primarily located in a participating State must give State and local governments a reasonable opportunity to review and comment on the proposed project. To find out more about a State’s process under Executive Order 12372, applicants may contact their State’s Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Names and addresses of some States’ SPOCs are listed at [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/spoc\\_1\\_16\\_2020.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/spoc_1_16_2020.pdf). Question 19 of Form SF-424 allows applicants to indicate compliance with Executive Order 12372; however, note that **applicants must supply as part of their complete application documentation demonstrates compliance.**

## **7. Funding Restrictions**

Construction activities are not allowable costs under the STEM Talent Challenge and may not be charged to the Federal funds of the project or provided as matching share. Additionally, the use of project funds to make equity investments is not allowable; neither Federal funds nor matching share may be used for such purposes.

## **8. Other Submission Requirements**

### **a. Means of Submission**

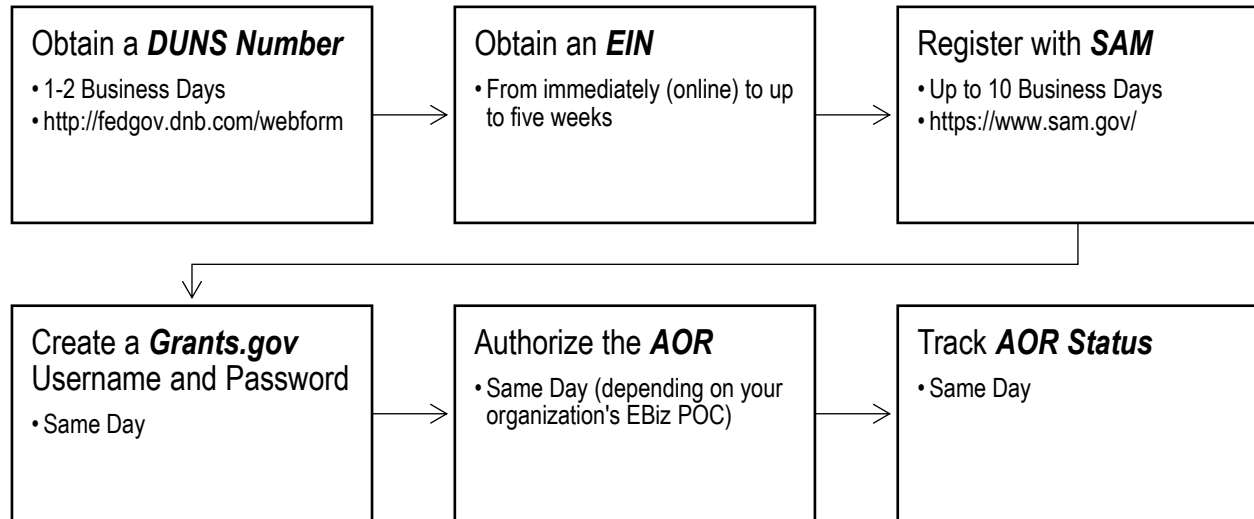
APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED THROUGH GRANTS.GOV. EDA will not accept paper, facsimile, or email transmissions of applications for the program except in cases of documented systems issues as described in Sections D.5 (p. 12) and H.8.e (p. 24) of this NOFO. The preferred electronic file format for attachments is Adobe portable document format (PDF) and, where appropriate, Microsoft Excel; however, EDA will also accept Microsoft Word-formatted electronic files. Note that the Grants.gov registration is a multi-stage process that involves a number of steps, including validation, verification, and registration through other websites such as SAM.gov. Please visit <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-training.html> for resources and guides on the Grants.gov registration process.

Once an application is submitted, it undergoes a validation process through Grants.gov during which the application may be accepted or rejected by the system. Please be advised that the validation process may take 24 to 48 hours to complete. Applications that contain errors will be rejected by Grants.gov and will not be forwarded to EDA for review. The applicant must correct the error before Grants.gov will accept and validate the application.

Please see Section H.8 (p. 24) of this NOFO for more detailed instructions and information on the requirements for submitting the applications electronically via Grants.gov.

## b. Pre-Submission Registration

Before applying to a competition under this NOFO, each applicant must both register with Grants.gov and register its Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) with Grants.gov. Applicants should note that this process can be lengthy, requires interaction with multiple organizations outside of EDA, and requires confirmation at each step.



Applicants may have already completed one or more of the steps set forth in the above flowchart, which depicts an example of how the pre-submission registration process generally flows (e.g., applicants may have already registered with Grants.gov, in which case they do not need to re-register). However, note that applicants that have not completed any of the above steps may require 23 or more business days to complete the required steps serially. Grants.gov is a centrally-managed Federal grants portal, and changes or updates to the process outlined above may occur after the publication of this NOFO. Prospective applicants should visit <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html> to ensure that they follow the most up-to-date instructions.

## E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

### 1. Evaluation Criteria

To apply for an award under this announcement, an eligible applicant must submit a complete application to EDA in accordance with Section D. of this NOFO. Applications that do not meet all of the requirements or that exceed the page limitations set forth in Section D.2.b (p. 8) of this announcement may be considered non-responsive and may not be considered for review.

Applications will be evaluated against the following six equally-weighted criteria by awarding between 0 and 10 points under each criterion.

- **Project Support and Connectivity:** The extent to which the project is supported by and connected to regional innovation leaders such as technology centers, business accelerators, community colleges, as well as STEM industry leaders such as technology startups, advanced manufacturers, and life science businesses, and other similar entities; as well as local leadership

and institutions, such as relevant governmental departments, councils of governments, planning entities, or other similar entities.

- **Engagement and Diversity:** The extent to which the project will encourage and solicit participation from an inclusive group of regional stakeholders that might benefit from participation including newly formed entities, rival existing participants, and underrepresented or unconnected populations and organizations across socioeconomic and geographic categories.
- **Economic and Innovation Impacts:** The extent to which the project stimulates innovation, increases regional innovation capacity, encourages experimentation with STEM talent development strategies and apprenticeship-based programs, and expands regional workforce capacity to support high-growth entrepreneurial ventures, industries of the future, and other innovation-driven businesses that have a high likelihood of accelerating economic competitiveness and job creation in their respective regions and in the United States.
- **Assets and Infrastructure:** Whether the project has access to, will leverage, and/or will contribute to a regional economy's competitive strengths, assets and infrastructure (such as technology infrastructure, innovation pipelines, and sources of early-stage capital).
- **Project Sustainability and Adaptability:** The extent to which the project is likely to be able to sustain activities once grant funds are expended, including the likelihood of future financial or programmatic support from non-Federal sources.
- **Project Feasibility:** The extent to which the application organization(s) demonstrates the ability to execute the proposed project successfully, including if the proposed project's budget and narrative reasonably and realistically correspond to the costs and activities necessary for its successful execution.

## 2. Review and Selection Process

Throughout the review and selection process, EDA reserves the right to seek clarification from applicants whose applications are being reviewed. EDA may ask applicants to clarify application materials, objectives, and scope of work, or modify budgets or other specifics necessary to comply with Federal requirements.

### a. Review for Eligibility and Completeness (Technical Review)

EDA staff will initially conduct an eligibility and technical completeness review (the "Technical Review") of all applications received to assess whether the application meets the requirements of D.2. Applications received from ineligible entities will not be considered for funding. Additionally, applications that do not contain all forms and required documentation listed in Section D.2 (p. 7) of this NOFO may be deemed non-responsive and excluded from further consideration. EDA expects all applicants to complete and include all required forms and documentation. However, EDA, in its sole discretion, may determine that an omission is a non-substantive technical deficiency if it can easily and quickly be rectified and therefore may continue its consideration of the application despite the deficiency.

### b. Merit Review

Merit Reviewers will evaluate the applications against the evaluation criteria enumerated in Section E.1 of this NOFO. Each application will be reviewed by at least three Merit Reviewers. Merit reviewers may include but are not limited to, DOC and EDA personnel, and other Federal and non-Federal subject matter experts. EDA, in its sole discretion, may use a statistical technique to normalize and aggregate Merit Reviewers' quantitative evaluations (i.e., scores) and may consider qualitative Merit Reviewer

evaluation information. For each competition, the most highly ranked applications will be recommended to the Grants Officer as the applications that merit consideration for EDA funding.

### **c. Due Diligence**

If an application is selected, the applicant still may have to complete certain due diligence requirements. EDA may request that the applicant submit additional documents and information to allow EDA to fully evaluate compliance with applicable rules and regulations. If the applicant provides the requested information and supporting documentation in a timely fashion and EDA determines that the project is fully compliant with applicable rules and regulations, the application will be forwarded to the Grants Officer for a final decision and award approval. Applicants that do not provide the additional information and supporting documentation in a timely fashion or that are deemed not to be in compliance with applicable rules and regulations will receive notification that their application was not successful.

### **d. Grants Officer's Decision**

The most highly ranked applications will be forwarded to the Grants Officer under this announcement, which will be EDA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regional Affairs (DAS/RA) or the DAS/RA's delegate. The Grants Officer has been delegated the authority to make the final decision on whether to fund an application and may select a project for funding that differs from the most highly ranked applications based on any of the following Selection Factors or use these Selection Factors to break a tie for applications that are otherwise considered substantially equal in merit:

1. the extent to which the application meets the overall objectives of Section 28 of the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980;
2. the ability of a project to start quickly, realistically achieve project goals, and catalyze additional resources;
3. the financial or management capability of the applicant;
4. the applicant's performance under previous Federal financial assistance awards, including whether the awardee submitted required performance reports and data;
5. the extent to which the application leverages complementary public or private sector programs or policies, including but not limited to those operated or managed by the Federal Government;
6. the availability of program funding;
7. the extent to which any technical deficiencies or any budgetary or legal issues in the application may impact an applicant's ability to execute the project or achieve the desired impacts; or
8. the extent to which the project supports EDA's goals of geographic balance in distribution of program funds (including but not limited to diversity of urban and rural states), project types and award activities and the overall portfolio.

The final decision of the Grants Officer must be consistent with this NOFO and applicable law. Should the Grants Officer make a selection that differs from the review committee's recommendation, the Grants Officer will document the rationale for the decision in writing. There is no appeal process for denied applications.

### 3. Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity System (FAPIS) Review

Before making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal Share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, EDA is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIS). See 41 U.S.C. § 2313.

Each applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. EDA will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR § 200.205.

## F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 1. Federal Award Notices

Subject to the availability of funding, EDA expects to notify applicants of its decision in writing approximately 90 – 120 days after the Application Deadline. If an application is selected for funding, the EDA Grants Officer will issue a signed grant award (Form CD-450), which is the authorizing financial assistance award document and includes the DOC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions and Specific Award Conditions.

By signing Form CD-450, the applicant agrees to comply with all award provisions. EDA will provide Form CD-450 via email through Grants Online or its successor electronic grants management system. The email will provide the authorized representative with instructions on how to create an account with Grants Online to view and sign the award. The applicant must sign and return the Form CD-450 without modification within 30 days of the date of EDA's signature on the form. **Failure to sign and return the Form CD-450 during this timeframe may be considered grounds for appropriate enforcement action pursuant to 2 CFR § 200.338 ("Remedies for noncompliance"), INCLUDING AWARD TERMINATION.**

If an applicant is awarded funding, neither DOC nor EDA is under any obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award or to make any future award(s). Amendment or renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the discretion of DOC and EDA.

EDA will provide written notice to all applicants informing them whether their application was selected for funding. EDA will retain unsuccessful applications in accordance with EDA's record retention schedule.

### 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

#### a. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements

Recipients of an EDA award will be bound by the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) as set forth in 2 CFR part 200. These regulations may be accessed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2019-title2-vol1/CFR-2019-title2-vol1-sec200-200>.

### **b. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions**

EDA will apply the DOC Financial Assistance Standards Terms and Conditions (ST&Cs) applicable on the date of award. The ST&Cs may be accessed at the following website:

[http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants\\_management/policy/default.htm](http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/default.htm).

### **c. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements**

EDA will apply the DOC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements dated December 30, 2014, 79 Fed. Reg. 78,390. The Pre-Award Notice may be accessed at the Government Printing Office (GPO) website at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2014/12/30/2014-30297/department-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>.

## **3. Reporting**

### **a. Financial, Performance, and Impact Reports**

Recipients are required to submit progress reports and financial status reports in accordance with the terms of the award, generally no less frequently than semi-annually. In addition, recipients will be required to track and submit performance data on EDA-sponsored outputs and resulting outcomes, semi-annually and annually respectively. All reports must be submitted in electronic format as specified in the terms of the award. As part of its administration of the program, EDA may conduct program evaluations. If so, recipients may need to furnish performance data to evaluators, including but not limited to EDA staff and outside parties contracted by EDA. EDA may also, for research purposes linked to improving economic outcomes, choose to share data with other Federal partners, including but not limited to statistical agencies.

### **b. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006**

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal awards to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All recipients are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all sub-awards over \$25,000. Please see the OMB guidance published at 2 CFR part 170, which can be accessed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2019-title2-vol1/CFR-2019-title2-vol1-part170>.

### **c. Government Performance and Results Act**

EDA may require data on activities, outputs, and actual impacts of the funded investment, pursuant to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), as well as those specified under the specific terms and conditions of the EDA grant award, up to nine years after award. For example, recipients may be expected to continuously track their engagement activities within the scope of work, other beneficiaries, and project-related stakeholders. They may also be expected to collect data on the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of their activities, such as, for example, the number of beneficiary strategic plans developed, the number of new business partnerships formed, or new capabilities acquired using surveys of beneficiaries or clients if necessary. EDA will specify the data collection techniques and reporting mechanisms to be used.

#### **d. Information Sharing**

For the purposes of achieving rigorous program evaluations, all applications (including those that are not selected for funding) may be shared with EDA staff, outside parties contracted by EDA for the purposes of evaluation, and other Federal agencies.

#### **e. Requirements for Recipients With More Than \$10 Million in Federal-wide Funding**

As required by appendix XII to 2 CFR part 200, a recipient with more than \$10 million in Federal-wide funding must maintain the currency of information reported to SAM that is made available in the designated integrity and performance system (currently FAPIIS) about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings.

### **G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)**

For questions concerning this NOFO, you may contact the EDA Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship:

- Email: [oiie@eda.gov](mailto:oiie@eda.gov)
- Phone: (202) 482-8001

### **H. OTHER INFORMATION**

#### **1. Right to Use Information**

The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, and also by Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 CFR § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

#### **2. Freedom of Information Act Disclosure**

In addition, Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. § 552), may be found at 15 CFR part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this NOFO may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure



confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.

### **3. Notice of Government-Wide Procurement Restriction**

The general rule for Federal financial assistance is that contractors that develop draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids, or requests for proposals are prohibited from competing for the final procurement. In accordance with 2 CFR §§ 200.317 and 200.319, only State recipients are expressly exempt from this prohibition; States must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds. Local governments and Indian tribes may also take advantage of the exemption in two narrow circumstances: (i) if they are required (by statute, for example) to follow the State's procurement rules in full and without exception; or (ii) if they are required to follow a specific State procurement rule that creates an explicit conflict with the prohibition in 2 CFR § 200.319(a) (i.e., there is a statute that requires or permits the local government or Indian tribe to award the final procurement to the same contractor that developed the draft specifications). Absent one of these two scenarios, the local government or Indian tribe must comply with the prohibition. Applicants are encouraged to contact the applicable EDA representative listed in Section G (p. 20) of this NOFO with any questions regarding application of this regulation.

### **4. Past Performance and Non-Compliance with Award Provisions**

Unsatisfactory performance under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding. Failure to comply with any or all of the provisions of an award may have a negative impact on future funding by DOC (or any of its operating units) and may be considered grounds for any or all of the following actions: (1) establishing an account receivable; (2) withholding payments to the recipient under any DOC award(s); (3) changing the method of payment from advance to reimbursement only; (4) imposing other specific award conditions; (5) suspending any active DOC award(s); and (6) terminating any active DOC award(s).

### **5. Restrictions Governing Making Grants to Corporations Convicted of Felony Criminal Violations and/or Unpaid Federal Tax Liabilities**

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, execution by an applicant of the Representation by Corporations Regarding an Unpaid Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Conviction Under Any Federal Law (see Appendix A) will be required in a format requested by EDA before any award will be made under this NOFO. Specifically, if an applicant is a corporation as defined in the Certification, it is required to sign and return the Appendix A, Part I Certification (p. 25). The applicant will be required to submit this certification, signed by its AOR, as part of a complete application.

### **6. EDA's Non-Relocation Policy**

Applicants are advised that should an application be selected for award, the recipient will be required to adhere to a specific award condition relating to EDA's non-relocation policy as follows:

In signing this award of financial assistance, Recipient(s) attest that EDA funding is not intended by the Recipient to assist its efforts to induce the relocation of existing jobs within the U.S. that are located outside of its jurisdiction to within its jurisdiction in competition with other U.S. jurisdictions for those same jobs. In the event that EDA determines that its assistance was used for those purposes, EDA retains the right to pursue appropriate enforcement action in accord with the Standard Terms and Conditions of the Award, including suspension of disbursements and termination of the award for convenience or cause, which may include the establishment of a debt requiring the Recipient to reimburse EDA.

For purposes of ensuring that EDA assistance will not be used merely to transfer jobs from one location in the United States to another, each applicant must inform EDA of all employers that constitute primary beneficiaries of the project assisted by EDA. EDA will consider an employer to be a “primary beneficiary” if: (i) the employer is specifically named in the application as benefitting from the project, and the applicant estimates that the employer will create or save 100 or more permanent jobs as a result of the investment assistance (if the jobs in question were originally located in a smaller community, EDA may extend this policy to the relocation of 50 or more jobs); or (ii) the employer is or will be located in an EDA-assisted building, port, facility, or industrial, commercial, or business park constructed or improved in whole or in part with investment assistance prior to EDA’s final disbursement of funds.

## **7. Audit Requirements**

Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in the OMB Uniform Guidance (see 2 CFR part 200, Subpart F, “Audit Requirements”). The OMB Uniform Guidance requires any non-Federal entity (e.g., nonprofit organizations, including nonprofit institutions of higher education and hospitals; States; local governments; and Indian Tribes) that expends Federal awards of \$750,000 or more in the recipient’s fiscal year to conduct a single or program-specific audit in accordance with the requirements set out in the OMB Uniform Guidance. Applicants are reminded that EDA or the DOC’s Office of Inspector General also may conduct an audit of an award at any time.

## **8. Instructions for Application Submission via Grants.gov**

The most up-to-date instructions for application submission via Grants.gov can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. To begin, complete, and submit your application,

- navigate to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>;
- click “Search for Opportunity Package”;
- in the “Funding Opportunity Number” field, enter “EDA-HDQ-OIE-2020-STEMTALENT”;
- click “Search”;
- under the “Actions” column, click the “Apply” link that corresponds to the competition to which you wish to apply (i.e., the STEM Talent Challenge Program);
- enter your email address (if you would like to receive updates from Grants.gov regarding this NOFO) or check the box that indicates you do not wish to provide it, then click “Submit”;
- choose to apply using Workspace by clicking “Login to Apply Now” or choose to download the legacy application package by clicking “Download Package”; and
- follow the instructions provided on the Grants.gov website and on each webpage to complete and submit your application.

#### **a. Register Early and Submit Early**

To submit a complete application through <https://www.grants.gov/> (Grants.gov), an applicant must register for a Grants.gov user ID and password. Note that this process can take between **three to five business days** or **AS LONG AS FOUR WEEKS** if all steps are not completed correctly. To avoid delays, EDA strongly recommends that applicants start early before logging in, registering, reviewing the application instructions, and applying. Information about the Grants.gov registration process for organizations can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>. Please note that organizations already registered with Grants.gov do not need to re-register; however, all registered organizations must keep their SAM registration, which includes the CCR database registration, up-to-date through sam.gov or their applications will not be accepted by Grants.gov.

#### **b. AOR Requirement**

Applicants must register as organizations, not as individuals. As part of the registration process, you will register at least one AOR for your organization. AORs registered at Grants.gov are the only officials with the authority to submit applications at Grants.gov; please **ensure that your organization's application is submitted by an AOR. IF THE APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED BY ANYONE OTHER THAN YOUR ORGANIZATION'S AOR, IT WILL BE REJECTED BY THE GRANTS.GOV SYSTEM AND CANNOT BE CONSIDERED BY EDA.** Note that a given organization may designate multiple individuals as AORs for Grants.gov purposes.

#### **c. Field Limitations and Special Characters**

Please be advised that Grants.gov provides the following notice with respect to form field limitations and special characters: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/submitting-utf-8-special-characters.html>.

#### **d. Verify That Your Submission Was Successful**

Applicants should save and print written proof of an electronic submission made at Grants.gov. Applicants can expect to receive multiple emails regarding the status of their submission. Since email communication can be unreliable, applicants must proactively check on the status of their application if they do not receive email notifications within a day of submission.

EDA requests that applicants kindly refrain from submitting multiple copies of the same application. Applicants should save and print both the confirmation screen provided on the Grants.gov website after the applicant has submitted an application and the confirmation email sent by Grants.gov when the application has been successfully received and validated in the system. If an applicant receives an email from Grants.gov indicating that the application was received and subsequently validated but does not receive an email from Grants.gov indicating that EDA has retrieved the application within 72 hours of that email, the applicant may contact the representative listed in Section G (p. 20) of this announcement to inquire if EDA is in receipt of the applicant's submission.

It is the applicant's responsibility to verify that its submission was timely received and validated successfully at Grants.gov. To see the date and time your application was received, navigate to <https://www.grants.gov> and click on the "Track My Application" link under the "Applicants" tab. For a successful submission, the application must be received and validated by Grants.gov, and an agency tracking number

must be assigned. Once validation is complete, the status will change to “Validated” or “Rejected with Errors.” If the status is “Rejected with Errors,” your application has not been received successfully. For more detailed information about why an application may be rejected, please see “Encountering Error Messages” at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/encountering-error-messages.html> and “Frequently Asked Questions by Applicants” at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-fags.html>.

#### **e. Grants.gov Systems Issues**

If you experience a Grants.gov systems issue (i.e., a technical problem or glitch with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission in a timely manner, please (i) print any error message received; (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at (800) 518-4726 for assistance; and (iii) contact EDA using the contact information in Section G of this NOFO. Ensure that you obtain a case number regarding your communications with Grants.gov. Please note that problems with an applicant’s computer system or equipment are **not** considered systems issues. Similarly, an applicant’s failure to, e.g., (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered AOR submits the application, or (iii) notice receipt of an email message from Grants.gov are **not** considered systems issues. A Grants.gov systems issue is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov itself, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. In the event of a confirmed systems issue, EDA reserves the right to accept an application in an alternate format.

Applicants should access the following link for assistance in navigating Grants.gov and for a list of useful resources: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>. The following link lists “Frequently Asked Questions by Applicants”: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-fags.html>. If you do not find an answer to your question there, contact Grants.gov by email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) or telephone at (800) 518-4726. The Grants.gov Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except on Federal holidays.

**APPENDIX A: REPRESENTATION BY CORPORATIONS REGARDING AN UNPAID DELINQUENT TAX LIABILITY OR A FELONY CONVICTION UNDER ANY FEDERAL LAW**

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, none of the appropriated funds made available by relevant appropriations Acts may be used to issue a financial assistance award to any corporation that:

- was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, unless any agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interest of the Government; and/or,
- has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, unless an agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interest of the Government.

For purposes of the below certification, a corporation is defined as an entity that has filed articles of incorporation in one of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, or the various territories of the United States or associated independent republics including American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Midway Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. (Note that this includes both for-profit and non-profit organizations.)

The below certification is required for all new financial assistance awards, and for all amendments to existing financial assistance awards, that are made to corporations (as defined above) and that are funded with appropriated funds made available to the Department of Commerce pursuant to relevant appropriations Acts. This certification is further required to the extent that other appropriation Acts contain the same or substantively similar prohibitions against the issuance of financial assistance awards to certain corporations.

Instructions: All recipients that are corporations (as defined above) must complete paragraphs (1) and (2) below, which must be signed below by an authorized representative of the corporation. Recipients that are not corporations are not required to complete this representation.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ [insert name of corporation] certifies that it is  is not  (check one) a corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under a Federal law within the 24 months preceding the signature date of this Representation.

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ [insert name of corporation] certifies that it is  is not  (check one) a corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability.

By: \_\_\_\_\_

[Typed name and title of the signing individual]

[Typed phone number of the signing individual]

[Typed email address of the signing individual]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_