FY 2024, Good Jobs Challenge
Frequently Asked Questions
July 29, 2024

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Contents

The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the Good Jobs Challenge Program and the application requirements set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this program. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements, or the specific application requirements set forth in the NOFO. In all cases, statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the NOFO, shall prevail over any potential inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs.

Introduction and Key Definitions

1. **What is the Good Jobs Challenge?**

Though the American Rescue Plan, EDA created The Good Jobs Challenge, a $500 million competitive grant competition aimed at training Americans for good jobs by developing and strengthening regional workforce training systems and sectoral partnerships. These systems and partnerships create and implement industry-driven training programs, designed to connect unemployed, underemployed, or under-skilled workers to existing and emerging job openings. Ultimately, these systems are designed to train workers with the skills to secure quality jobs, that provide good pay, benefits, and growth opportunities, such as a union job.

In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, EDA received another $25 million to continue the Good Jobs Challenge. Through this appropriation, EDA will support regional workforce training systems to support sectoral partnerships that train and place program participants in good jobs and advance industries in the federal key technology focus areas. These key technology focus areas fortify the economic and national security of the United States.

2. **How many awards will EDA be making in the FY 24 Good Jobs Challenge competition?**

$25 million will be awarded through this FY24 Good Jobs Challenge NOFO. EDA anticipates awarding between approximately 5-8 grantees with awards ranging from $1 million to $8 million.

EDA will scale awards as appropriate to the proposed geographic, industry, and worker role coverage of a given regional system. While there is no maximum amount of funding that can be requested for any phase or combination of phases, the following estimates can help guide your funding request. An applicant could request, for example:

- $2 million for Program Design to design an employer-driven skills training program and make the capacity building investments necessary to enable its implementation, including securing the needed capital (e.g. equipment, leased space) per region, industry, and worker role.
- $6 million for Program Implementation to implement an employer-driven skills training program per region, industry, and worker role.

This example is only for illustrative purposes. EDA will evaluate funding requests based on the criteria outlined in section E.1 of the NOFO.

3. **What is a "sectoral partnership" and why does the Good Jobs Challenge focus on them?**

For purposes of the Good Jobs Challenge:

"Sectoral partnership" is defined as a partnership of employers from the same industry that join with other strategic partners to collaboratively design sector strategies that train and place workers into good jobs that the employers need filled and intend to fill through the partnership. The strategic partners can include: government, education institutions (including community and technical colleges), training organizations, economic development organizations, workforce development organizations, unions, union federations, worker-serving organizations, labor management partnerships, industry associations, employer-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, and/or community-based organizations. A sectoral partnership is focused on one specific industry within an identified economic region and one or more specific roles within that industry.

Sectoral partnerships are effective because: they are carefully built to include all necessary partners before workforce solutions are designed; they cut across traditional economic development, workforce, education, and social services system silos; they are targeted to in-demand sectors with high-quality jobs; and they consider the economic realities of a regional industry in assessing workforce demand and training needs. Sectoral partnerships heighten the chance of job placement after program completion given their connection to real-time employer demand.

Figure 1 offers a visualization of how different entities work together in a sectoral partnership.

Figure 1 – Visualization of a Sectoral Partnership:
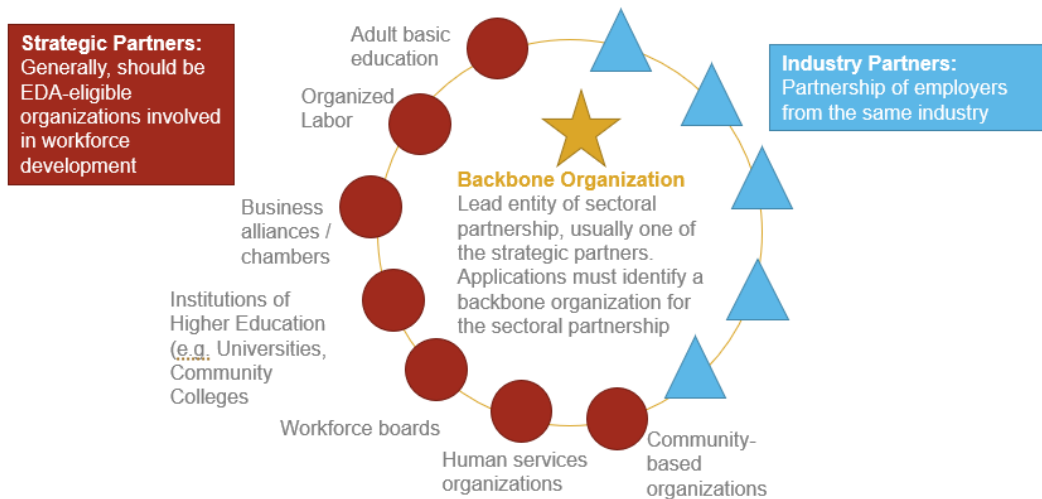
4. **What is a Backbone Organization"?**

"Backbone Organization" is defined as the award recipient and lead entity of a sectoral partnership that serves as the intermediary across all partners in the sectoral partnership.

5. **What makes an effective Backbone Organization?**

An effective Backbone Organization will have most or all the following characteristics:

- Convening power in the region;
- Committed support of the executive leadership from the region and buy-in from appropriate stakeholders (e.g., a governor, mayor or chief executive of a jurisdiction, chief executives of major employers, heads of labor unions, presidents of two- and four-year institutions of higher education, executive leadership of community organizations representing underserved populations in the industry and/or that face barriers to the labor market, etc.);
- Relationships and credibility with key players in the workforce ecosystem, including employers, governmental entities, State or local workforce development boards, educational institutions, and/or labor organizations, community-based organizations representing underrepresented populations in the industry and/or those that face barriers in the labor market, and/or labor organizations;

- A proven track record of coordinating across the sectors and partners and of driving stakeholders to successful action;
- Ability to translate various sectors' objectives and key concerns to other sectors;
- Strong fundraising capabilities; and
- Dedicated full-time employee(s) focused on addressing regional workforce issues to support regional economic development.

See Section A.2.b. of the NOFO for additional details and examples.

6. What is a good job?

A **"good job"** is defined as a paid position of regular employment that aligns with the Good Jobs Principles. The Good Jobs Principles include jobs that ensure all workers are paid a stable, predictable living wage, receive basic benefits (e.g., paid leave, health insurance, retirement/savings plan), have safe working conditions, have the ability to form and join unions and engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation, and have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs.

7. What are the Good Jobs Principles?

The Departments of Commerce and Labor published eight Good Jobs Principles to create a framework for workers, businesses, labor unions, advocates, researchers, State and local governments, and Federal agencies for a shared vision of job quality:

- **Recruitment and Hiring**: Qualified applicants are actively recruited – especially those from underserved communities. Applicants are free from discrimination, including unequal treatment or application of selection criteria that are unrelated to job performance. Applicants are evaluated with relevant skills-based requirements. Unnecessary educational, credentials and experience requirements are minimized.
- **Benefits**: Full-time and part-time workers are provided family-sustaining benefits that promote economic security and mobility. These include health insurance, a retirement plan, workers' compensation benefits, work-family benefits such as paid leave and caregiving supports, and others that may arise from engagement with workers. Workers are empowered and encouraged to use these benefits.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)**: All workers have equal opportunity. Workers are respected, empowered, and treated fairly. DEIA is a core value and practiced norm in the workplace. Individuals from underserved communities do not face systemic barriers in the workplace. Underserved communities are persons adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality, including Black, Indigenous, people of color; LGBTQ+ individuals; women; immigrants; veterans; military spouses; individuals with disabilities; individuals in rural communities; individuals

without a college degree; individuals with or recovering from substance use disorder; and justice-involved individuals.

- **Empowerment and Representation**: Workers can form and join unions. Workers can engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Workers contribute to decisions about their work, how it is performed, and organizational direction.
- **Job Security and Working Conditions**: Workers have a safe, healthy, and accessible workplace, built on input from workers and their representatives. Workers have job security without arbitrary or discriminatory discipline or dismissal. They have adequate hours and predictable schedules. The use of electronic monitoring, data, and algorithms is transparent, equitable, and carefully deployed with input from workers. Workers are free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation at work. Workers are properly classified under applicable laws. Temporary or contractor labor solutions are minimized.
- **Organizational Culture**: All workers belong, are valued, contribute meaningfully to the organization, and are engaged and respected especially by leadership.
- **Pay**: All workers are paid a stable and predictable living wage before overtime, tips, and commissions. Workers' pay is fair, transparent, and equitable. Workers' wages increase with increased skills and experience. Skills and Career Advancement: Workers have equitable opportunities and tools to progress to future good jobs within their organizations or outside them. Workers have transparent promotion or advancement opportunities. Workers have access to quality employer- or labor-management-provided training and education

Applicants must demonstrate that the training supported by this NOFO leads to jobs that align with these principles. You can find a one-pager on the Good Jobs Principles here: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/goodjobs/Good-Jobs-Summit-Principles-Factsheet.pdf

8. **What does Equity mean in the context of the Good Jobs Challenge?**

Consistent with Executive Order (EO) 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government*; EO 14091, *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*; and EDA's Equity Investment Priority, EDA expects projects to advance equity to underserved populations to the extent practicable. In this context, EDA is seeking projects that directly benefit: 1) one or more traditionally underserved populations, but not limited to women, Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders; or 2) underserved communities within geographies that have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity such as Tribal Lands, Persistent Poverty Counties, and rural areas with demonstrated, historical

underservice. A more detailed definition of what constitutes an underserved population and a listing of persistent poverty counties may be found under the Equity heading here.[1]

A successful project will articulate which populations or communities will benefit (as noted above and https://www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/) and include a plan for inclusive community engagement in the project and ensuring that the economic benefits of the project will be shared by all communities in the project region, including any underserved community. It should articulate the communities affected, barriers those communities may face in accessing benefits of the project, contemplated outreach efforts, and other planned steps to address identified barriers, as appropriate.

Underserved communities could also include historically underserved populations and areas, communities of color, women, and other groups facing labor market barriers such as persons with disabilities, disconnected youth, individuals in recovery, individuals with past criminal records, including justice impacted and reentry participants, serving trainees participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and veterans and military spouses.

9. **What types of training models does the Good Jobs Challenge support?**

There are several different skills training models that have proved to be effective if the fundamental characteristics we have described in previous sections are in place.

Models may differ in the type of worker skills training they provide and will differ based on the sectors or occupations that the trainings are aligned to. Examples that meet the interests of this Good Jobs Challenge – to develop and strengthen regional partnerships and systems and train workers with in-demand skills that lead to well-paying, good jobs – include:

- **Registered Apprenticeship Programs**: These programs combine paid on-the-job training under the direction of a mentor with classroom instruction and result in an industry-recognized credential certifying occupational proficiency. Registered Apprenticeship Programs are industry-vetted, approved, and validated by either the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or a recognized State Apprenticeship agency.[2]
- **Skills Training Programs**: Programs that train workers with the foundational skills needed for in-demand, good jobs and prepare workers for employment that provides career pathways after completion of the program. These include career and technical education

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[1] "Investment Priorities." U.S. Economic Development Administration. https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities.

[2] Elements of a quality pre-apprenticeship program are described in DOL ETA Training Employment Notice 23-23 (https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories/ten-23-23). More information about Pre-Apprenticeship can be found at: https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/explore-pre-apprenticeship. More information about Registered Apprenticeship Programs can be found at: https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/registered-apprenticeship-program

programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels as well as adult education programs, and other programs offered at community and technical colleges. This NOFO will support program participants that are placed into jobs by the end of the period of performance.

- **Pre-apprenticeship programs**: Programs that are designed to assist individuals who do not currently possess the minimum academic credentials or skills requirements for selection into a Registered Apprenticeship program to meet the minimum selection criteria established in a program sponsor's apprenticeship standards and which maintains at least one documented partnership with a Registered Apprenticeship program.
- **Other Work-and-Learn Models**: These programs include those when a worker is conditionally hired for a specific training period and earns wages while receiving on-the-job training in foundational skills as well as applied concepts. After successful completion of the training period, the worker is officially hired as a full-time employee.
- **Certification or Credentialing Programs**: Programs in which participants obtain an industry-recognized certificate or certification and/or a license recognized by the State involved or the Federal Government.
- **Labor Management Training Program**: Programs that are sponsored or developed jointly by labor and management through collective bargaining in accordance with applicable law.

All models share demonstrated track records of success in other contexts and the opportunity for employers to make strong commitments to hiring in the context of the program. Programs may target unemployed and/or underemployed workers as well as incumbent workers with opportunity for increased wages through targeted upskilling. All models should include access to wraparound supports to support successful completion of training and placement into good jobs.

10. How does this NOFO address the needs of unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers?

Applicants are encouraged to develop plans that address the needs of unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers particularly those that have been subject to any technology, energy, or trade shocks in their respective region. Based on review criteria for "Regional Needs and Alignment" in NOFO section E.1, reviewers will assess applicants on the extent to which the project benefits workers subject to any technology, energy, or trade shocks in the region. In addition the NOFO includes a selection factor (see NOFO section E.2.c) for proposals that target unemployed, underemployed workers, and/or incumbent workers impacted by technological trade, or energy transitions.

11. How does this NOFO encourage union participation?

This NOFO prioritizes union participation in many ways. First, a labor union may qualify as an eligible applicant (see question 12 below). Second, the Good Jobs Principles emphasize that a

good job should be one where workers have the ability to form and join unions and engage in protected, concerted activity without fear of retaliation. Third, sectoral partnerships are encouraged to include unions and other representatives of worker interests. Finally, project narratives should include explanations of how employers and labor representatives are involved in the creation of training programs. The extent to which worker voice is represented in the sectoral partnership is assessed under the merit criteria and selection factors of this NOFO (see sections E.1 and E.2.c).

Applicant Eligibility

12. Which types of entities are eligible to apply for funding?

Eligible applicants for grants under this NOFO include a(n):

- District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD);
- Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes;
- State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions;
- Institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education (this could include community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, or Minority-Serving Institutions); or
- Public or private non-profit organization or association, including labor unions, acting in cooperation with officials of a political subdivision of a State.[3]

Any of the entities listed above can serve as a Backbone Organization.

13. What types of entities are not eligible to apply for funding?

EDA is not authorized through this program to provide direct financial assistance to individuals, small businesses, or for-profit entities, including for-profit institutions of higher education. Applications from such entities will not be considered for funding. In addition, such entities are not eligible for funding under a subaward.

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[3] See section 3 of PWEDA (42 U.S.C. § 3122) and 13 C.F.R. § 300.3.

14. Does my organization have to be workforce board, regional planning council, or State agency to serve as the Backbone Organization for a proposal?

No. As a Backbone Organization under the Good Jobs Challenge, your organization can be any of the eligible entities. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure that they review the characteristics of an effective Backbone Organization in question 5.

15. Are previous or active EDA grantees eligible for this program?

Yes. Applicants that are current recipients of EDA awards are generally eligible to apply for funding under the Good Jobs Challenge. However, funds may not duplicate other sources of Federal funding, including funding by EDA or any other Federal agency. Where other Federal funding may be involved in the project, the applicant should provide the Federal program name and contact information with the application to facilitate interagency coordination and avoid duplication of resources.

16. Will active and/or previous grants that the federal government awarded my organization affect my organization's eligibility and competitiveness for the Good Jobs Challenge?

An applicant's performance under previous Federal financial assistance awards, including whether the grantee submitted required performance reports and data, is a selection factor under this NOFO. An applicant should indicate if other Federal funds have been secured or requested to support any portion of the project for which an EDA investment is proposed. An applicant also should describe how the EDA investment will complement, leverage, or otherwise align with other public and private investments to accomplish the planned deliverables and outcomes. Unsatisfactory performance under prior Federal awards may result in an application not being considered for funding.

17. To apply as a nonprofit organization must I be legally organized as a 501(c)(3) or a 501(c)(6)?

No. For eligibility purposes, nonprofit organizations are not required to have any form of status with the IRS, including 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) status. An eligible nonprofit organization must be an entity organized in accordance with applicable State law that is, in accordance with the definition of nonprofit organization at 2 CFR § 200.1, (1) operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization. A nonprofit applicant will be required to provide relevant organizational documentation, including a current certificate of good standing, articles of incorporation, and bylaws.

18. Can a labor union be an eligible entity? If so, what is the process?

Yes, a labor union may be eligible as long as it is able to prove that it is a non-profit organization as described in question 17, which includes submitting required documentation such as a current certificate of good standing, articles of incorporation, and bylaws. If the labor union is not organized under the applicable State law, and therefore is not able to provide a certificate of good standing, EDA will consider alternative documentation. Such documentation must show that the entity is currently organized as and operating as a non-profit organization.

19. Can youth-serving (e.g., persons under 18) organizations apply for this funding?

Yes, youth-serving organizations that are eligible entities may apply for funding. Note that immediate job placement is a primary goal of this program, so successful applicants will need to demonstrate that they are creating a pipeline of skilled job seekers for quality jobs. However, traditional K-12 education programs that are not a part of a broader workforce framework which leads to immediate placement into jobs may not be as competitive as projects that immediately place workers into jobs.

20. This NOFO will only make awards to well-established sectoral partnerships and will not provide funding for system development. What would EDA expect applicants to have in place to be considered a well-established sectoral partnership?

EDA would expect a well-established sectoral partnership to have already taken the following steps:

- Identified a backbone organization or system lead entity and key stakeholders for the system;
- Demonstrate relationship and commitment from employers; and
- Have robust plans for the following:
    - System development
    - Training Model and Development
    - Employer Commitment and Pledge
    - Leveraging Other Funds
    - Outreach and Recruitment
    - Wraparound Services

Available Funding

21. What is the expected period of performance for this grant?

The project period of performance depends on the nature of the project for which the grant is awarded. Because of the need for recipients to meet identified benchmarks to proceed through project phases, EDA expects projects to range in duration from **24 months to 36 months**. EDA will work closely with award recipients to accommodate their projected timelines within reason and allowances of regulations and grant policies, though EDA will prioritize programs that are able to place workers into good jobs within 24 months of the award. EDA expects that all projects will proceed efficiently and expeditiously, and EDA encourages applicants to clearly document how quickly they will be able to start and complete the proposed project scope of work.

Allowable Activities

22. What type of activities are allowable?

The FY 24 Good Jobs Challenge NOFO is designed to support established Backbone Organizations in designing job training that is responsive to business needs. In addition, sectoral partners deliver training, administer wraparound supports that support participants to and through training, and ultimately support program completers with placement into a job. Accordingly, EDA anticipates funding activities related to:

- **Program/Training Design**: funding for a sectoral partnership to identify the skills needed by industry and workers, develop the skills training curriculum and materials, and secure technical expertise needed to train workers with the skills needed by businesses, including providing professional development and capacity-building to trainers and educators, and
- **Program/Training Implementation:** funding to deliver workforce training and wraparound services that place workers into good jobs through a new or expanded sectoral partnership.

The following examples are designed to help explain how EDA anticipates awarding funding. Note that awards available under this FY 24 Good Jobs Challenge NOFO will not support activities to establish or plan sectoral partnerships (see question 66). Activities of this nature would include costs related to identifying key stakeholders, and initial planning activities.

Example 1: Region A has identified a group of employers across an industry. The Backbone Organization in Region A has already assembled key stakeholders in the region and identified labor shortages that are holding back industry growth. With this funding, the Backbone Organization will make subawards or contracts, as appropriate, to training providers that lead

to placement into jobs and wraparound services for program participants. EDA may approve an award to the Backbone Organization for training program design and training implementation activities in the amount of $5 million total – $1.5 million for training design and $3.5 million for program implementation.

Example 2: Region B has already designed training that is aligned to industry needs in several in-demand occupations. Through EDA funding, they will be able to meet unmet demand for this training for a longer period. EDA may approve an award for program implementation activities in the amount of $3 million to expand training.

23. **Previous Good Jobs Challenge competitions allowed funds to be used for system development activities. What are system development activities and are they allowable in the FY 24 NOFO?**

System development activities include those that help a Backbone Organization establish and develop a sectoral partnership. This includes activities related to identifying and convening key stakeholders and developing processes to gather skills needs from employers and translate those into effecting training-to employment models. In short, the FY 24 NOFO does not support planning and organizational activities.

Awards available under this FY 24 Good Jobs Challenge NOFO are intended to support well-organized and coordinated existing workforce development and sectoral partnerships. EDA expects that at the time of award, the Backbone Organization is prepared to design training in partnership with employers and/or begin program implementation upon receipt of any award. Such lead entities or Backbone Organizations funded by this FY 24 Good Jobs Challenge NOFO will have already taken the following steps:

- Identified necessary stakeholders and defined their roles and responsibilities in the prospective sectoral partnership;
- Established and developed processes for management of all potential sub awardees in the sectoral partnership;
- Regularly convened and substantially engaged key stakeholders in the planning process;
- Established a plan to provide wraparound services to participants- specifically identifying the services (childcare, healthcare, transportation, etc.) applicants reasonably anticipate that participants will need to complete their participation and provided plans to work with community-based organizations, vendors, local government, and other key partners to deliver this work effectively to program participants. Plans should describe how providers will deliver these services quickly and equitably and avoid slower, ad-hoc approaches that could negatively impact participants' recruitment, retention, and completion;
- Adopted a shared vision that is supported by documentation from key stakeholders as appropriate to the regional training system;
- Demonstrated ability and capacity to collect and report data on outcomes for program participants;

- Demonstrated capacity to engage employer sponsors and regional workforce system partners in an organized, consistent way to meet the needs of the region;
- Provided support to an industry with growing labor demand or gaps in labor supply, including industries funded by the Administration's Investing in America agenda;[4]
- Provided training and placement activities for the historically disadvantaged groups in the local population; and
- Demonstrated capacity to engage with labor unions or worker-serving organizations.

24. Does the FY 24 NOFO support construction projects?

No. Unless related to equipment installation, costs for any activity that disturbs the ground or modifies a structure **are not** eligible under this NOFO. EDA recognizes that in many circumstances having adequate, modernized facilities is a critical component of a successful workforce training program that responds to industry needs today and into the future. As such, equipment costs, expenses related to securing adequate space (e.g., rent, leases), and other non-construction capital expenses are allowable expenses under this program. In addition, costs to install equipment may be allowable with prior EDA approval. For example, costs to install electrical wiring to make equipment operable, or costs to adequately ventilate a space to support the use of the equipment, may be allowable.

25. Must an applicant apply with a project that includes both program design and program implementation? Can an applicant apply with a project that is only program design or only program implementation?

All projects must include Program Implementation, but the source of funding for Program Implementation does not need to be from EDA.

EDA is open to proposals that:

- Have already completed Program Design phases and only need funding for Program Implementation; or
- Have secured outside funding for program design but need EDA funding for program implementation.

Applicants will need to demonstrate successful completion of program design by submitting documentation to show activities related to appropriate program design have been completed.

26. How does EDA define wraparound services? Can these funds be included in our budget?

Wraparound services or "participant support costs" are important services that mitigate barriers to employment for trainees, students, and workers to help them complete workforce

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[4] "Investing in America." The White House. https://www.whitehouse.gov/invest/

training activities. Examples include costs that are necessary for participation in the program, such as transportation, language support, financial coaching, childcare, career navigation and coaching, access to technology, and healthcare, including behavioral healthcare. The definition of "participant support costs" can be found at 2 CFR § 200.1. Funding for these types of activities generally should be facilitated through a competitively contracted service provider.

Please note costs such as work stipends or wage subsidies are not allowable under the Good Jobs Challenge. No funds may be paid directly to individuals.

27. Can funding be used for tuition or training costs?

Yes, tuition costs are generally considered an eligible training cost under this NOFO; both tuition and training costs are eligible components of an overall operating budget for EDA funding in the Good Jobs Challenge.

28. Can grant funds be used to provide wages or stipends to program participants?

No, grant funds cannot be used to provide wages or stipends to participants of the program. Applicants are encouraged to utilize other funding sources should they choose to include participant wages as a component of their program. See question 66 for more information on unallowable costs under this program.

Commitment Letters

29. What commitment letters are required in the application?

This application requires letters of commitment for members of the sectoral partnership and employer partners. It also requires letters for employer commitments. Additional letters of support from non-stakeholder organizations can be included as well (optional). There is no cap on number of letters that can be included in the application. Letters of support do not count towards the project narrative page limit.

30. What is the format of letters of commitment for members of the sectoral partnership?

Letters should be formatted as business letters addressed to the lead entity of the sectoral partnership. Letters of commitment for sectoral partnership members must clearly name the organization and describe their role in the organization at a minimum. The letter must be signed by the chief executive officer or equivalent role in the organization.

31. How should applicants provide evidence of employer commitments?

The application requires letters of commitment from employer partners. These letters should be formatted as business letters addressed to the lead entity of the sectoral partnership.

Letters of commitment must clearly name the organization and be signed by the chief executive officer or equivalent role in the organization. Commitment from employer partners must include the specific number of workers to hire and identify occupations that support the industry. Further, the documentation must describe how the jobs for which the participants will be placed align with the Good Jobs Principles. A letter expressing generalized support would be insufficient. Please see the Merit Review criteria of the Good Jobs Challenge in section E.1 of the NOFO for information on how EDA will evaluate applications – specifically the criteria on "Strength of Employer Partnerships."

Given their history of success for workers and employers, EDA encourages applicants and employers to utilize the Registered Apprenticeship program framework or build on existing Registered Apprenticeships, which combine paid on-the-job training under the direction of a mentor with classroom instruction and result in an industry-recognized credential certifying occupational proficiency.

Lead Applicants, Subawardees, Contractors, and Co-Applicants

32. Who should be the Lead Applicant for a Good Jobs Challenge application?

The Backbone Organization that meets the criteria of an eligible entity (see question 12) will be the Lead Applicant. Other stakeholders may be involved depending on the scope of work, including co-applicants, subrecipients, and contractors.

33. What is the difference between a co-applicant, a subrecipient, and a contractor?

The following table provides general information about each type of entity. See also 2 CFR § 200.331 (Subrecipient and contractor determinations) for factors that distinguish a subrecipient from a contractor.

	Co-Applicant	Sub-Awardee	Contractor
Needs to complete a full application	YES	NO	NO
Receives award funding directly from EDA	YES	NO	NO
Must be an eligible entity	YES	YES	NO
Performs all or a portion of project activities and generally has responsibility for program implementation	YES	YES	NO
Allowable costs incurred may be charged to the award (as consistent with the award including the scope of work)	YES	YES	YES

Key Technology Focus Areas (KTFAs)

34. Must projects align with the key technology focus areas?
Yes.

35. What are the key technology focus areas?

The list of ten critical technologies is drawn from the initial Key Technology Focus Areas (KTFAs) in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. § 19107). The applying consortium may select a core technology area that falls within a single KTFA or crosses multiple KTFAs where the Hub

has the potential to become within a reasonable time a self-sustaining, globally competitive leader in that selected core technology area's market. The statutorily defined ten KTFAs are:

- Artificial intelligence, machine learning, autonomy, and related advances.
- High performance computing, semiconductors, and advanced computer hardware and software.
- Quantum information science and technology.
- Robotics, automation, and advanced manufacturing.
- Natural and anthropogenic disaster prevention or mitigation.
- Advanced communications technology and immersive technology.
- Biotechnology, medical technology, genomics, and synthetic biology.
- Data storage, data management, distributed ledger technologies, and cybersecurity, including biometrics.
- Advanced energy and industrial efficiency technologies, such as batteries and advanced nuclear technologies, including but not limited to for the purposes of electric generation.
- Advanced materials science, including composites 2D materials, other next-generation materials, and related manufacturing technologies.

36. What must applicants do to demonstrate their alignment with a key technology focus area?

The project narrative must identify at least one key technology focus area that the sectoral partnership is aiming to advance. For example:

- Applicant A has a well-developed life sciences manufacturing cluster. This applicant is proposing job training aimed at life sciences manufacturing. This applicant would say that their key technology focus area is biotechnology, medical technology, genomics, and synthetic biology.
- Applicant B is looking to upskill workers for jobs in the semiconductor industry. Region B's key technology focus area would be high-performance computing, semiconductors, and advanced computer hardware and software.
- Applicant C is investing in offshore wind energy. The region is training welders to construct t wind turbines. Region C is aiming to advance the advanced energy and industrial efficiency technologies key technology focus area.
- Applicant D is investing in robotics and autonomy and needs to train mechatronics technologists and technicians that operate, test, maintain, and adjust robotics. Region D is advancing robotics, automation, and advanced manufacturing key technology focus area.

- Applicant E is investing in predictive healthcare technologies and healthcare information technology. The region needs to train radiologic and biological technicians. Region E is aiming to advance biotechnology, medical technology, genomics, and synthetic biology key technology focus area.

37. Is the EDA awarding proposals that train in specific jobs?

No. The sectoral partnerships may train participants for a wide range of jobs in those industries. Applicants will need to identify their industry's associated KTFA and explain how the sectoral partnership advances that KTFA. The applicant will need to provide evidence of how the jobs meet the Good Jobs Principles and that they are in demand for their region.

38. What does the NOFO mean by "advance one or more key technology focus areas?"

There are myriad ways in which the applicant can argue that the sectoral partnership that is being proposed will advance one or more KTFAs. The NOFO asks the applicant to identify not only their KTFA(s) but also what jobs will help that KTFA grow, for example, what placements need to happen to increase revenue or productivity. The strength of an applicant's response will be based on how well they can demonstrate that the sectoral partnership will advance the industry.

Other Requirements

39. Do the activities proposed under the Good Jobs Challenge have to be aligned with a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

Yes, each project funded under this NOFO must demonstrate consistency with the region's current Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) or an equivalent EDA-accepted regional economic development strategy that meets EDA's CEDS or strategy requirements.

 Find your CEDS here: https://www.statsamerica.org/ceds/

CEDS are locally based and regionally driven economic development planning processes, typically prepared by an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD) organization, to guide capacity building efforts that best serve economic development in the region. Documents for consideration as a CEDS equivalent can include various regional economic development plans (or a combination of plans), including but not limited to regional comprehensive plans, regional resilience plans, or recovery plans.

Each application for the Good Jobs Challenge should include in the Project Narrative a discussion of how the collection of proposed component projects, as a whole, will support the economic development needs and objectives outlined in the applicable CEDS or equivalent

strategy or strategies. Applicants may also include letters of support from organizations that prepare CEDS or equivalent plans for areas that will be served by the proposed system and/or project.

40. How do I locate the applicable CEDS for my region? What if my project covers multiple planning districts or States?

EDA supports the CEDS Resource Library here where applicants can determine whether their region is served by an Economic Development District (EDD) organization and locate its most recent CEDS. Because of the regional footprint of the projects anticipated by this NOFO, applicants may need to show alignment with multiple CEDS or regional or statewide equivalents.

Applicants may contact the EDA Representative for their area listed at www.eda.gov/contacts (and in NOFO Section G) for assistance to locate the applicable CEDS or equivalent plan(s).

41. May we still apply if our region does not have a CEDS?

Yes, but applicants must identify a CEDS-equivalent for their region (see question 39). Applicants from geographies that are not covered by an Economic Development District (EDD) are encouraged to reach out to the EDA at GoodJobsChallenge@eda.gov to help determine a CEDS-equivalent.

42. Must an applicant meet the distress criteria?

Yes. EDA's distress criteria are used to determine whether an area is eligible for economic development programs. There are multiple pathways to meet the distress criteria. Applicants must self-define the appropriate region geographically. The geographic area comprising a region need not be contiguous or defined by political boundaries but should constitute a cohesive area capable of undertaking self-sustained economic development. See C.3 of the NOFO for information on the distress criteria.

43. Must the project align with EDA's Investment Priorities?[5]

Yes. EDA evaluates all project applications to determine the extent to which they align with EDA's investment priorities. EDA's investment priorities provide an overarching framework to ensure its grant investments portfolio contributes to local efforts to build, improve, or better leverage economic assets that allow businesses to succeed and regional economies to become more resilient.

44. Must the project align with EDA's Equity Investment Priority?

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[5] "Investment Priorities." U.S. Economic Development Administration. Investment Priorities | U.S. Economic Development Administration (eda.gov).

Yes. Consistent with Executive Order (EO) 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government*; EO 14091, *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*; and EDA's Equity Investment Priority, EDA expects projects to advance equity to underserved populations to the extent practicable. In this context, EDA is seeking projects that directly benefit: 1) one or more traditionally underserved populations, but not limited to women, Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders; or 2) underserved communities within geographies that have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity such as Tribal Lands, Persistent Poverty Counties, and rural areas with demonstrated, historical underservice. A more detailed definition of what constitutes an underserved population and a listing of persistent poverty counties may be found under the EDA's Investment Priority web page under the Equity heading.[6]

> A successful project will articulate which populations or communities will benefit (as noted above and https://www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/) and include a plan for inclusive community engagement in the project and ensuring that the economic benefits of the project will be shared by all communities in the project region, including any underserved community. It should articulate the communities affected, barriers those communities may face in accessing benefits of the project, contemplated outreach efforts, and other planned steps to address identified barriers, as appropriate.

45. Must the applying organization have an active SAM registration?

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, applicants are required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting an application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in the application; (iii) make certain certifications (see also section D.3 of the NOFO), and (iv) 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. Backbone Organizations should begin registration in SAM by the Application deadline. **SAM registration must be complete before EDA may make an award under this NOFO**. 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

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[6] "Investment Priorities." U.S. Economic Development Administration. https://www.eda.gov/funding/investment-priorities.

receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Tech Hubs Benefit of Designation

46. What is the Tech Hubs benefit of designation for the Good Jobs Challenge?

Sectoral partnerships affiliated with a Tech Hub designee will be given up to five additional points in the merit review (see NOFO section E.1) and consideration as a selection factor (see NOFO section E.2.c.). The Selection Official may also use the extent to which a project or portfolio of projects aligns with and advances Tech Hubs' strategies as a factor to select a project for funding that differs from the most highly ranked applications or break a tie for applications that are otherwise considered substantially equal in merit.

See **here** an overview of the Tech Hubs Program and **here** for a description of all Tech Hubs benefits of designation.

47. Why does the FY 24 Good Jobs Challenge NOFO contain a Tech Hubs benefit of designation?

The Federal government is committed to supporting all designated Tech Hubs as they strive to realize their visions, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and several Federal departments and agencies are offering technical assistance, network expansion, and access to other Federal funding opportunities to support the designated Tech Hubs.

48. How does an applicant receive the Tech Hubs benefit of designation for the Good Jobs Challenge?

If the project's proposed location is geographically in a region designated as a Tech Hub by EDA and the proposed sectoral partnership is aiming to align with and advance the Tech Hub's strategy, the applicant will need to describe in the project narrative how the proposed project will align with and advance the Tech Hub's strategy and how the project benefits an area in the Tech Hub designee's geographic area. Further, the sectoral partnership that is being proposed will need to place program participants in good jobs that advance the Tech Hub's industry. In addition, the applicant will need to provide evidence that it is a member of the Tech Hub's consortium.

49. Are applicants that are in the geographic region of a Tech Hub guaranteed the 5 points for the benefit of designation?

No. The 0 to 5 extra points will be awarded based on the adequacy of the applicant's response.

50. What does it mean to be a designated Tech Hub?

The Tech Hubs Program is making place-based investments to drive technology- and innovation-centric economic growth by strengthening a region's capacity to commercialize, manufacture, and deploy critical technologies. The program invests in regions with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to become globally competitive, within approximately ten years, in the technologies and industries of the future. Cultivating the tech hubs of tomorrow will not only create good jobs for American workers at all skills levels, both equitably and inclusively, but also strengthen long-term U.S. national and economic security. The Tech Hubs Program seeks to ensure that the industries of the future—and their good jobs—start, grow, and remain in the United States.

Designated Tech Hubs provided a strong signal from EDA about a region's assets, resources, and capabilities, including that the region is in a position where an investment over the next five years can catalyze their emergence over the next decade as a self-sustainable, globally competitive hub in a particular technological area(s). Only designated Tech Hubs will be able to receive the benefit of designation. You can find a list of designated Tech Hubs at the following link: [2023 Tech Hubs Designees and Strategy Development Grant Recipients | U.S. Economic Development Administration (eda.gov)](#).

51. Can Tech Hubs Strategy Development Grantees receive the benefit of designation, even if they are not also designated Tech Hubs?

No. Each Strategy Development Grantee was awarded funding to prepare their consortium to apply for an implementation grant in a future Tech Hubs competition (provided EDA receives additional Tech Hubs appropriations). Only entities that have already been designated as a Tech Hub may receive the benefit of designation.

52. How can an applicant determine whether they are in the geographic region of a Tech Hub?

Tech Hubs designees defined their chosen geography as part of their application, and these geographies are listed on each designee's page **here**.

53. Will EDA accept more than one application from a given Tech Hub consortium?

Yes. EDA will accept more than one application from a Tech Hub consortium, but potential applicants are encouraged to coordinate with relevant consortium partners to the greatest extent possible. Each application must be supported by its own match commitment.

54. How does an applicant provide evidence of belonging to a Tech Hub consortium?

Applicants should include a letter from the Tech Hub Consortium Lead Entity or Regional Innovation Officer. The letter must state that the project is located in the geographic boundary of the Tech Hub, that the project advances the work of the Tech Hub, and that the Backbone Organization is a member of the Tech Hub consortium. This letter will be evaluated as part of the review process.

55. Is affiliation with a Tech Hub required to apply and receive funds?

No. Sectoral partnerships aligned with the key technology focus areas (KTFAs) of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 but unaffiliated with a Tech Hub may also apply.

Application Guidelines

56. What should be in the Project Narrative?

Please see section D.2.b.i of the NOFO for required information.

57. Is there a Matching Share requirement?

Yes. With limited exceptions, cost share is required for projects funded under this NOFO. Generally, the EDA investment rate (percentage of the total project costs) will be 50 percent, but EDA may fund up to 80 percent of total project costs based on the relative needs of the region. See Table 1: Maximum Allowable Investment Rate Based on Economic Distress of Region in section C.2.a of the NOFO for more information.

58. Must I include a staffing plan with my application?

Yes. 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 Form SF-424A for each project year. Applicants should include costs in their proposal to cover expenses to track and measure key metrics of their program. Applicants may use the optional budget and staffing plan template available at https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/american-rescue-plan/good-jobs-challenge/program-resources#resources to supplement the budget narrative.

59. Can an organization submit multiple applications for the Good Jobs Challenge?

Yes. An applicant can submit multiple applications as long as the applications are for separate and distinct projects, and each application is supported by its own match commitment.

60. What formatting is required for submission of materials?

To be eligible for funding, an applicant must obtain, complete, and timely submit a complete application electronically through the Economic Development Grants Experience (EDGE) at sfgrants.eda.gov.

61. What alternatives are there for the submission of applications for people with disabilities?

Applications will only be accepted electronically through EDGE at sfgrants.eda.gov. However, to accommodate applicants' accessibility requirements, a paper version of the application may be obtained by contacting EDA's Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIE) via email at oie@eda.gov or via phone at (202) 482-8001. EDA also will provide the requestor with the application in an accessible format that may include Rich Text Format (RTF) or text format (txt), a thumb drive, an MP3 file, braille, large print, audiotape, compact disc, or other accessible format.

62. After the application is submitted, what is the review process?

The review process begins with an initial screening to verify that all required forms and documentation are received by the deadline. Each application then goes through an independent merit review by a panel of at least three merit reviewers. Each application is reviewed based on the criterion published in the Notice of Funding Opportunity Announcement (see section E.1). The panel will review, evaluate and score the application. If the project is determined as competitive for an EDA investment, an Investment Review Committee (IRC) reviews each application package in depth using the same merit criteria. Based on this group evaluation, and subject to any due diligence (see section E.2.b in the NOFO), the IRC will recommend a list of top-ranked applications for the Selection Official. Applications recommended for funding that are also deemed compliant with applicable requirements will be forwarded to the Selection Official, who has been delegated the authority to make the final decision on whether to fund an application. The Selection Official may select a project for funding that differs from the most highly ranked applications based on any of the Selection Factors. The Selection Official may also use these Selection Factors to break a tie for applications that are otherwise considered substantially equal in merit.

63. How will applicants receive notification about selection results?

If an applicant successfully and timely completes all due diligence requirements and the application is selected for funding, EDA will notify the successful applicant in writing. This notice is not an authorization to begin work, however; work should not be undertaken until the award is signed by EDA and the applicant's authorized representative.

The EDA Selection Official will issue the award (Notice of Award), which is the authorizing financial assistance award document and includes Specific Award Conditions and the DOC

Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (DOC ST&Cs), as described in section F.2.b in the NOFO.

Financial Compliance, Indirect Costs, and Reporting

64. Where can I find more information on Cost Principles?

Please refer to Subpart E of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) as set forth in 2 C.F.R. part 200, updated and revised by the final rule published in the Federal Register on April 22, 2024 (89 FR 30046). Subpart E establishes principles for determining the allowable costs incurred by non-federal entities under the Federal award.

65. Which grant regulations apply to awards made under this NOFO—the regulations that are currently in effect or the forthcoming, revised regulations that will take effect on October 1, 2024?

Revised grant regulations that will take effect on October 1, 2024, will govern awards issued under this NOFO. Specifically, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) as set forth in 2 C.F.R. part 200, was updated and revised by a final rule published in the Federal Register on April 22, 2024 (89 FR 30046). Among other changes, the revised regulations increase the de minimis indirect cost rate from 10% to 15% of modified total direct costs and increase the equipment threshold to $10,000.

66. What costs are not allowable in the FY 24 NOFO?

The following use of project funds, whether provided by EDA or match sources, are not allowable costs under this NOFO:

- **Payments to Supplement Private Employer's Wage Expenses**. Project funds cannot be used to reimburse employers for the training of existing employees or used to subsidize a private employer's wage expenses.
- **Payments to Program Participants.** Project funds cannot be provided as cash payments to participants of training programs.
- **Subsidies to Participant Firms.** Project funds cannot be used to subsidize a non-eligible entity's operating costs or to pay private employers directly. This means that project funds may not be passed or transferred to companies being served by the applicant organization, nor may they be used to subsidize such companies' expenses that are unrelated to program activities, including general operating expenses.

- **Advertising & Marketing.** In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.421(b) and (d), the costs of promotional items and memorabilia, including models, gifts, and souvenirs as well as the costs of advertising and public relations designed to promote the applicant are not allowable. However, certain costs related specifically to recruiting participants and conducting program outreach (*e.g.*, social media ads, press releases, flyers, etc.) may be allowable.
- **Cloud Service Credits:** Credits to be distributed to companies (*i.e.*, startups and individuals) being served by the applicant organization are not allowable costs and thus are not an allowable source of matching share.
- **Construction Costs**: Any activity that disturbs the ground or modifies a structure that is not related to the installation and operation of equipment, and not pre-approved by EDA, cannot be purchased with award funds or provided as match.
- **Funds to Contractors that Provide Cash or In-Kind Match**: Unless exempted by 2 C.F.R. § 200.317, contractors that develop draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, invitations for bids, or requests for proposals are prohibited from competing for the final procurement. For instance, a professional engineer or architect who prepared the Preliminary Engineering Report for an EDA application would be excluded from bidding on the same work under the award. See Notice of Government-Wide Procurement Restriction, section H.5 of the NOFO.
- **Costs Related to Establishing the Sectoral Partnership**: Activities of this nature that are unallowable include costs related to identifying key stakeholders, establishing procedures for managing subawardees, and initial planning activities.

Further, in general, EDA does not reimburse pre-award project costs. For pre-award procurement costs to be eligible for reimbursement, the applicant must competitively procure services pursuant to the Federal government's procurement procedures. All pre-award costs are incurred at the applicant's own risk and will be considered for reimbursement, in EDA's sole discretion, only if an applicant receives an award and such costs are approved by EDA in writing. Under no circumstances will EDA or DOC be held responsible for application preparation expenditures, which are distinguished from pre-award project costs.

It is DOC policy that funds may not be used to pay for management fees in excess of costs or profits, unless statutorily authorized. Funds may not be used, directly or indirectly as an offset for other

67. Can we include pre-apprenticeship programs and costs into our proposal?

In general, the costs of pre-apprenticeship programs may be allowable, but we would encourage applicants to review the merit review criteria set out in the NOFO section E.1, and consider how the intent of the Good Jobs Challenge is to help fill immediate workforce needs. While pre-apprenticeship programs help build pipelines, the intent of the program is to place participants in jobs within two years of the start of the grant.

68. My organization is applying with a project that includes wraparound services for program participants. How should these wraparound services be included in our budget?

Generally, wraparound services will be provided by a service provider. These services should be included in the contractual category on your budget, since you will be competitively procuring a contract with the provider, who will be providing a service. If awarded, federal procurement standards at 2 CFR §§ 200.317-327 must be followed, unless the service provider is also an eligible entity under the Good Jobs Challenge NOFO and the provider is properly treated as a subawardee pursuant to the factors in 2 CFR § 200.331 (Subrecipient and contractor determinations).

69. What are the reporting requirements for Good Jobs Challenge?

All EDA grants are subject to semi-annual and annual reporting requirements. All recipients are required to submit financial, progress, and impact reports in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant award, generally no less than semi-annually. All project progress and financial reports must be submitted to the applicable EDA program officer in an electronic format to be determined at the time of award

In addition, this program will implement additional reporting requirements such as tracking participant data. All awardees should produce concrete, measurable impacts for workers in the region (e.g., employer commitments to hire, job placements, wage gain). We would encourage applicants to consider their data management plan for this program. Data and evaluation costs used directly for this program's requirements are an allowable expense.

Grantees will need to maintain rosters of program participants along with their demographics and sufficient identifying information. Metrics that will need to be tracked and reported may include the following number of workers participating in program broken down by key demographics, number of workers who complete the program broken down by key demographics, number of workers placed into jobs broken down by key demographics, average wages of job placements, average wage growth of job placements, retention of workers placed, amount spent on wraparound services, and total average cost per worker.

70. Are there any audit requirements for this award?

Yes. Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in the Uniform Guidance (see 2 C.F.R. part 200, Subpart F, "Audit Requirements"). The Office of Management and Budget recently increased the single audit threshold from $750,000 to $1 million in regulations effective October 1, 2024. Thus, any recipient or subrecipient under this NOFO that expends $1,000,000 or more in federal financial assistance during its fiscal year must have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year in accordance with subpart F.