

**Exhibit 1**

**Abstract**

**Information Technology Cluster Competiveness Project**

**Orange County Workforce Investment Board**

**U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration**

**Funding Opportunity Number SGA/DFA PY-11-05; CDFA 17.283**

<b>U.S. DOL Workforce Innovation Fund Proposal</b>
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**ABSTRACT**

**Applicant Name:** Orange County Workforce Investment Board (OCWIB)

**Applicant Category:** Local Workforce Investment Board Consortium

**Lead Applicant City/State:** Santa Ana, California

**Areas Served:** Orange County, California

**Project Name:** Information Technology (IT) Cluster Competitiveness Project

**Funding Level Requested:** \$2,700,000 (Technical Project); and \$300,000 (Project Evaluation)

**Project Type:** A - New and Untested Ideas

**Description of Proposed Project:** The Orange County Workforce Investment Board (OCWIB) will implement the Information Technology (IT) Cluster Competitiveness Project as part of a LWIB consortium that also includes the City of Anaheim and City of Santa Ana WIBs. Together the three agencies serve the entire population of over 3 million residents of Orange, County. The project builds on the notion that where industry clusters exist, such as financial services in New York, entertainment in Los Angeles, or wine production in Napa, there are significant opportunities for employment. Recent studies indicate that IT is among the most promising clusters in Orange County due to its pervasiveness; IT is everywhere. While IT is an industry in its own right, IT occupations also cut “horizontally” across virtually every other major cluster in the County, including healthcare, tourism and advanced manufacturing. However, while IT is a significant force in the local economy, a large number of local jobs remain unfilled due to an insufficient pool of qualified candidates. Businesses cite problems with education and training programs - both in terms of content and availability – to meet their needs for skilled IT workers.

The Project will implement a new approach to engaging business and education stakeholders in an intensive planning process concerning the education and training needs of companies in the IT cluster. This process, which will be led by business and include representatives from top IT businesses and other companies that hire large numbers of IT workers, will produce a roadmap that plots a course to address “just in time” training needs, those that are just emerging and the long-range workforce needs of industries in which IT skills are critical elements to companies’ success. Based on this roadmap, the three-year project will develop and implement a variety of pilot initiatives, including: 1) development of new IT training programs; 2) re-tooling existing programs to better reflect current and projected business-identified needs; 3) an IT Pipeline program at the local K-12 level; 4) a project targeted to low-income, largely Latino communities to bridge the “digital divide”; and 5) an improved IT business support/response system to address needs beyond training.

Ultimately, as a result of the strategic engagement process with business and education and the pilot initiatives, the Project will produce a series of short-term outcomes, including increased placements of new and returning workers into IT positions; skills upgrade of incumbent workers already in the Orange County IT industry; and prepare a greater number of high school students for entry-level IT jobs or advanced training. Long-range outcomes will include the availability of a large pool of skilled IT workers and increased capacity of the workforce system partners to support a wide range of IT business needs. As the result of a rigorous review process and analysis of data, the Consortium partners expect to identify a series of promising practices that are worthy not only of institutionalizing as part of the local service delivery system, but of replicating throughout the nation’s workforce system.

**Description of Proposed Evaluation Strategy:** OCWIB has determined that the evaluation process for the IT Cluster Competitiveness Project would benefit from the establishment of an

“arm’s length” relationship between OCWIB and the Project Evaluator. Therefore, the procurement of the Evaluator will be completed through a Request for Proposal (RFP) conducted by the Orange County Business Council (OCBC), which will also manage the Project Evaluator contract on behalf of the Consortium. While the Consortium members and other project partners recognize that the precise content of the evaluation will, in part, be based on recommendations from the firm or organization ultimately selected to serve as the Project Evaluator, the following three-part framework has been established for the Evaluation Plan; 1) a Formative Evaluation; 2) Outcome and Output Measurement; and 3) a Cost-Benefit Assessment. Because the Project is being submitted as a Type A proposal representing a ‘new and untested idea’, its evolution and ultimate form will be heavily dependent upon formative data. The intention of this evaluation element is to describe and understand discrepancies between the intended program process and what is happening in reality; to analyze strengths, challenges, barriers and unexpected opportunities; and to generate an ultimate description of program implementation. As such, the methodology utilized will be mostly qualitative in nature, using interviews, observations, and inspection of archival materials as primary data sources. With regard to measuring Project output and outcomes, a defined series of process and outcome measures have been defined. Once the Project Evaluator is selected, instruments will be developed to effectively assess all processes and outcomes, including expansion of local training programs, increasing the size of the labor pool, and growth in the local IT industry. To measure Project efficiency in financial terms, costs will be tracked on an outcome-by-outcome basis and the Evaluator will consider the project’s internal rate of return, once established.

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