

**ABSTRACT**  
**Workforce Innovation Fund Application**

**Applicant Name:** Fulton, Montgomery, and Schoharie Counties Workforce Development Board, Inc.

**Applicant Category:** Consortium of Local Workforce Investment Boards

**Lead Applicant City/State:** Amsterdam, New York

**Areas Served By the Grant:** Eleven (11) counties in the Greater Capital Region of New York, served by four (4) local workforce investment boards. The area includes the Capital Area WIB (Albany, Schenectady, and Rensselaer Counties); Columbia-Greene WIB; Fulton, Montgomery and Schoharie Counties Workforce Development Board; and Saratoga, Warren, Washington WIB.

**Project Name:** Steps Up to STEM: Addressing the STEM Skills Shortage in NY's Greater Capital Region

**Funding Level Requested:** \$2,999,970.00 technical costs, including \$203,250.00 evaluation costs

**Project Type:** Project Type A

**Description of the Proposed Project:** Through the Steps Up to STEM project, our consortium seeks to address the STEM skill shortage in the Capital Area to ensure employers have access to qualified workers needed for success and economic growth. We aim to increase the number of disadvantaged youth, low-income adults and dislocated workers who are interested in STEM careers and create a flexible region-wide STEM talent pipeline system that links the workforce system, employers, educators, and workers through Two-Step Career Paths.

The main goal of the project is to cultivate better results for job seekers and employers and to create better efficiencies for program delivery. Addressing the STEM skill shortage in the Greater Capital Region of New York State will ensure that employers have access to qualified workers by establishing a new pipeline of STEM talent that links the workforce system, employers, educators, and emerging and returning

workers. Implicit in this goal is the realization that success for all is built on a foundation of career pathways and life-long learning.

The strategy for addressing the STEM skill shortage in the eleven counties is two-fold. First, we will increase awareness about STEM careers among both youth and adults, the value and opportunities such careers provide and the resources available to prepare for success in this field. These activities will help maintain and build the region's STEM talent pipeline so that employers have a greater pool of STEM-trained workers. Second, we will facilitate linkages among employers, job seekers, workforce development professionals and education providers to develop Two-Step Career Plans customized to increase an individual's readiness to meet the employer's job/hiring requirements. The principal activities that will be undertaken as part of the grant will include 1) a STEM Awareness Campaign; 2) Job Seeker Recruitment & Preparation; 3) Employer Recruitment & Participation; 4) STEM-Focused Sector Partnerships; 5) Individualized Two-Step Career Plans; and 6) Professional Development of Career Center Staff.

We anticipate the Steps Up to STEM program to result in greater interest in and pursuit of STEM career opportunities, increased STEM-related credential attainment including "employer specialized" credentials, and more strategic screening of entry-level STEM job applicants by the public workforce system. Ultimately, the program will have positive long-term impacts on employers' access to a STEM capable regional workforce, documented work readiness skills, more affordable STEM training options available to employer and jobseekers and cost savings for employer and the workforce system via decreased recruitment costs, lower entry-level training investments and increased retention rates.

**Description of the Proposed Evaluation Strategy:** The Steps Up to STEM program will undergo both an implementation evaluation and an outcomes evaluation. A third-party independent evaluator will be procured for the program evaluation. For the implementation evaluation, the evaluator will be expected to examine the core activities undertaken throughout the program and the outputs produced by each activity.

The objective of the implementation evaluation is to improve the effectiveness of program activities by monitoring progress throughout the life of the program; engage stakeholders and ensure their insight is incorporated into program decisions; and provide evidence for why program elements are or are not producing expected outputs. Progress toward achieving output targets will be evaluated throughout the program and detailed in program status reports. The evaluator will examine how the program has been implemented at each stage, and to what extent the program is aligned with the original plan.

The third-party evaluator also will be expected to assess both the anticipated outcomes, as outlined below, as well as any unanticipated or important interim outcomes. Combined with the Implementation Evaluation, the Outcomes and Impacts Evaluation will allow the evaluator to determine the short- and long-term program achievements at various stages of program deployment. It combines numerical considerations with, perhaps most important, considerations of quality to ensure that program components are beneficial and effective for stakeholders. Data collection for the evaluation will draw build on data reports from NYSDOL One Stop Operating System, a customized employer-worker connections database, surveys, interviews and focus groups.

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