

America's Promise Job-Driven Grant Program FOA
FOA-ETA-16-12
Frequently Asked Questions
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

1) What is the timeline of the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) announcement and funding?

Applications for grant awards will be accepted immediately upon publication of this notice in the Federal Register with a closing date of 4:00:00 p.m. Eastern Time August 25, 2016.

2) Who can apply?

Grants under this program will be awarded to a partnership of private and public entities. Grants will be awarded to the lead applicant of a regional workforce partnership. Eligible lead applicants include the following types of entities:

- 1) the workforce investment system;
- 2) education and training providers, including community and technical colleges and systems; and,
- 3) business-related nonprofit organizations, an organization functioning as a workforce intermediary for the express purpose of serving the needs of an industry, or a regional or industry association.

Applications that do not include a lead applicant that meets the eligibility requirements of one of the three types of entities mentioned above will be considered non-responsive and will not be reviewed.

3) Who are required partners in the regional workforce partnership?

The lead applicant must include at least one representative of each of the four types of required regional workforce partnership entities listed below:

- 1) Employer and industry representatives that align with the partnership's regional sector strategies;
- 2) Workforce investment system representing the regional service area;
- 3) Economic development agencies representing the regional service area; and
- 4) Education and training providers representing the regional service area, including community and technical colleges or systems; joint labor management training partnerships; and nonprofit and community-based organizations that offer job training.

4) Are any other partners required?

To ensure that projects have strong employer engagement, applicants are required to partner with **at least five employers** or a regional industry association with at least five employer members representing each industry sector and service area targeted through the sector strategy. To satisfy this requirement, applicants must partner with five or more independent employers, a consortium of at least five employers, or a regional industry association with at least five employers.

Beyond the required regional workforce partners, we strongly encourage you to collaborate with other partners that reflect the scope of the regional workforce partnership and may include: workforce intermediaries; community-based organizations; state and local governments, including government agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, State Apprenticeship Agencies; foundations and philanthropic organizations; other Federally-funded programs, such as Adult Basic Education, Social Security disability benefits, Centers for Independent Living, Employment Networks, Small Business Development Centers, as well as other programs administered by the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Transportation, and/or Energy; providers of supportive and specialized services; for-profit organizations that provide job training; disability service providers, faith-based organizations; and, a data or technology partner to support the development, implementation, and./or maintenance of a tech-enabled mechanism to collect ongoing feedback from employers and participants.

5) Can I apply for more than one grant?

Applicants may only submit one application as the lead applicant in response to this FOA. However, you may submit one application as lead applicant, and in addition may be included as a partner in one or more applications submitted where you are not the lead applicant.

Multiple applications from an organization as lead applicant are not allowed. If multiple applications are received, the most recent application submitted will be reviewed. If the most recent application is disqualified for any reason, we will not replace it with an earlier application.

6) What amount of funding is available? Is there a limit?

Through this FOA, approximately \$100 million in funds is expected to be available to fund 20 - 40 grants with individual grant amounts ranging from \$1 million to \$6 million. You may apply for a ceiling amount of up to \$6 million for four years.

You should request funding that is commensurate with the scope and scale of the project proposed. Rural and smaller regional communities may propose to serve their economic region or to collaborate through regional partnerships with other regions to support smaller-scale projects, as appropriate. Awards made under this Announcement are subject to the availability of Federal funds.

7) How long are the grants active?

The period of performance is 48 months. This performance period includes all necessary implementation and start-up activities. These activities include: startup activities; increasing employer engagement in sector strategies by ensuring employer involvement in the regional workforce partnership; activities related to the development and expansion of regional workforce partnerships; providing training to participants; placement activities; and, participant follow-up for tracking and reporting performance outcomes. We expect that start-up activities such as hiring appropriate grant program staff and project design activities will begin immediately. We also expect that grantees will begin serving participants within the first six to nine months after the date of grant award. We strongly encourage grantees to develop their project work plans and timelines accordingly. Grantees must plan to expend fully grant funds during the period of performance.

8) Who can be served through the grant?

The intent of this FOA is to fund projects that provide tuition-free education/job training to unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers – including disadvantaged populations such as low-income, underrepresented in the targeted industry, dislocated workers, and other populations with training and employment barriers – to help them pursue or advance in middle- to high-skilled employment in H-1B industries and occupations that align with the targeted industry sector(s) during the grant period of performance.

All training participants must be older than 16 years of age and not currently enrolled in school within a local educational agency.

For applicants proposing to serve incumbent workers, no more than 25 percent (25%) of the total participants served may be incumbent workers that meet the eligibility criteria.

Applicants must design their program and outreach strategies to ensure successful inclusion of low-income individuals, but grantees are not required to conduct an individualized means-test. Outreach strategies to reach low-income individuals can be specific to this population and/or can include strategies targeting broader populations that include large numbers of low-income individuals, such as: underrepresented groups within a targeted industry or occupation; and individuals who face barriers to training and employment,

including long term unemployment, limited English proficiency, disabilities, child care needs, prior criminal conviction, or other barriers. While applicants are not required to conduct an individualized means-test as part of these strategies, they are required to ensure that their outreach strategies and education/job training programs are designed to address barriers for the individuals served.

9) Are there minimum goals for participant service levels based on the amount of funding requested?

Yes. The America’s Promise FOA sets minimum goals for the number of participants to be served during the grant period, based on the funding amount requested by applicants. These numbers are minimum outcome goals applicants must propose for the numbers of participants to be served through the grant, and applicants are strongly encouraged to serve more than the minimum thresholds.

Minimum Goals for Participants Served during the Grant Period Based on Funding Request*

Funding Request	Minimum Participants Served
\$1,000,000 –\$2,000,000	175-355
\$2,000,001 - \$3,000,000	355-535
\$3,000,001 - \$4,000,000	535-715
\$4,000,001 - \$5,000,000	715-890
\$5,000,001 - \$6,000,000	890-1,070

Applicants should propose participant targets based on the FOA requirements and that are appropriate for the scope of their project. Applicants should refer to the scoring criteria for more information on how they will be scored on proposed targets specifically, Section IV.B.3.(2) Expected Outcomes and Outputs.

10) Is there a match requirement?

No. Cost sharing or matching funds are not required for this program. Applicants should not propose matching funds as it is not a requirement of this FOA. Please note that any resources contributed to the project are considered leveraged resources and do not constitute cost sharing or matching funds. Cost sharing or match is not one of the application screening criteria.

While there is no match requirement and applicants should not propose matching funds, applicants will be scored based on the strength of leveraged resources (leveraged resources are not match) and these leveraged resources should be considered a critical component of the Project Design. More

information on leveraged resources may be found in Section IV.B.3.(6), Project Budget and Budget Justification.

However, to help ensure a successful project and meet the minimum goal for participants served, applicants must secure leveraged resources in an amount equal to at least 25 percent (25%) of the total requested funds to support higher service and training costs and accomplish the project's overall goals and milestones. In addition to leveraging and alignment with Federal resources, applicants should ensure public, private, and foundation leveraged resources are sufficient to meet the service and training needs of all participants served. Leveraged resources are a critical component of the project design and applicants will be scored based on the strength of these leveraged resources as described in section IV.3.(6)(b), Project Narrative.

11) What are examples of activities that are allowable with this funding opportunity?

Projects funded under this FOA will support the provision of tuition-free training to participants along a sector-based career pathway within a specific H-1B industry, including providing participant support services, as necessary; supporting the development and expansion of regional workforce partnerships; and increasing employer engagement in sector strategies. Only activities and services that support individuals seeking employment in middle- to high-skilled employment in H-1B industries and occupations are allowable activities under this grant.

Within the training strategies, employment and training activities can include a variety of types of training within a sector-based career pathway, allowing participants to obtain the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to gain or advance in employment in middle- to high-skilled H-1B industries and occupations through tuition-free training.

For additional information on allowable training and service strategies under this FOA, refer to Section I.D.

12) What types of training can be provided under these grants?

Projects must design their strategies to include tuition-free education and training in a high-quality program that enables individuals to advance along a career pathway that supports the growth of a regional workforce within a specific H-1B industry or occupation, including providing participant support services necessary to successfully move individuals into middle- to high-skilled employment.

Under this FOA, training along a career pathway may start with entry-level occupations, but must lead to employment in middle- and high-skilled positions

in H-1B industries and occupations that align with the regional sector strategy(ies). In addition, projects must include viable ways for each participant to pursue a career pathway that may include paid work-based learning models such as Registered Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training, paid work experience or paid internships, or postsecondary degree or certificate programs that are appropriately matched to the participant's individual needs and skills requirements of the intended occupation of employment. Individual assessments provided by staff, such as career counselors, should include determining a customized sector-based career pathway to employment, career preparation as well as adequate training that will lead to the identified employment, and stackable and portable industry-recognized credentials, where appropriate

13) Are there targeted industries and/or occupations under this FOA?

America's Promise grants will fund projects that support well-paying, middle- and high-skilled, and high-growth jobs across the entire range of H-1B industries. To meet the legislative intent of positioning American workers to reduce the need for skilled foreign workers under the H-1B visa program, applicants must design their programs to support occupations for which H-1B visas have been certified, or other occupations in industries in which a significant number of H-1B visas are certified. A list of these industries is below. To view specific occupations for which H-1B visas have been certified, visit the Department of Labor's Foreign Labor Certification Data Center Web site (http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/performance_data.cfm) for the latest database of occupations approved under H-1B petitions.

According to recent data, a wide range of industries may meet these criteria in local and regional areas across the country, such as Information Technology (IT), Cyber Security, and Broadband, as well as a variety of non-IT industries and occupations that require technology skills, including but not limited to advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and financial services. In fact, more than two-thirds of technology jobs are outside of the technology sector.

Applicants should review below the list of industries that are using H-1B visas to hire foreign workers to assist your program alignment.

H-1B Industries that are using a significant number of visas to hire foreign workers include:

- IT and IT-related industries
- Healthcare
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Financial Services
- Educational Services

These are the H-1B industries that we have identified as permissible for applicants to target under this grant competition. Applications that propose to train participants in occupations that do not fall within these industries must show that they are occupations for which H-1B visas have been certified. This may be shown by using the data provided on DOL's Foreign Labor Certification Data Center Web site.

14) What can I do now to prepare for the solicitation?

We encourage you to view the online tutorial, "Grant Applications 101: A Plain English Guide to ETA Competitive Grants," available through WorkforceGPS at: <https://strategies.workforcegps.org/resources/2014/08/11/16/32/applying-for-eta-competitive-grants-a-web-based-toolkit-for-prospective-applicants-438?p=1>. Prospective applicants can register on www.Grants.gov to access the FOA or access the FOA at https://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm.

Additionally, a pre-recorded Prospective Applicant webinar will be available online no later than June 27, 2016 at https://www.doleta.gov/grants/find_grants.cfm and available for viewing any time after that date. While a review of this Webinar is encouraged, it is not mandatory.

New Questions - Updated July 20, 2016

15) Should the project work plan be included as an attachment or as part of the project narrative?

Applicants can include the work plan as an attachment to the project narrative or as part of the project narrative.

If the work plan is included as an attachment, it will not be counted towards the 25-page limit for the project narrative. If the work plan is included as part of the project narrative, it will count towards the 25-page limit for the project narrative.

16) What is the definition of a region?

Applicants can propose to serve a regional area located within or across state lines, as long as the service area comprises a single economic region. Economic regions are defined primarily by the movement of goods, capital, labor, consumption, and other economic forces within a geographic area. Defining an economic region involves identifying the surrounding areas, communities, counties, and municipalities that have similar industry and employment characteristics, looking beyond traditional political boundaries; and identifying the workforce needs of the identified areas.

Applicants should provide a clear description of the economic region and identify the factors that contribute to the definition of the region. Discussion should include, but is not limited to, factors such as economic interdependence (e.g., common industries or economic sectors); assets (e.g., human capital, financial capital, research and development institutions, educational institutions, and infrastructure); and networks (e.g., leadership and investor) that demonstrate the existence of a regional economy. See the U.S. Cluster Mapping Website (<http://www.clustermapping.us/>) for data on regional clusters and economies.

Applicants may not propose to serve non-contiguous multi-regional areas or a national area. A multi-regional or national area is defined as two or more non-contiguous economic regions.

17) What is “tuition-free” training?

The intent of “Tuition-free” training under this FOA is to increase opportunities for individuals to receive education and training that leads to in-demand and industry-recognized credentials and degrees, at no cost to the participant. Costs for education and training, as well as training-related activities, can be paid for by grant funds, leveraged resources, or a combination of both.

Grant funds should be used to cover tuition and the costs of training-related activities on a first-dollar basis ensuring that training and education are free to individuals. While this grant investment is intended to offset costs of support services and provide tuition-free training to participants, to help ensure a successful project and meet the minimum goal for participants served, applicants must secure leveraged resources in an amount equal to at least 25 percent (25%) of the total requested funds to support higher service and training costs and accomplish the project’s overall goals and milestones. In addition to leveraging and alignment with Federal resources, applicants should ensure public, private, and foundation leveraged resources are sufficient to meet the service and training needs of all participants served.

Education, training, and training-related activities can include a variety of types of training within a sector-based career pathway, allowing participants to obtain the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to gain or advance in employment in middle- to high-skilled H-1B industries and occupations. Types of training can include: Registered Apprenticeships; On-the-Job Training (OJT); paid work experience; paid internships; and classroom, competency-and technology- based training. See section 1.D, Program Design Elements, of the FOA for more information on training.