



CALL FOR IDEAS
Workforce Solutions Grants
Prepare for and Connect to Sustainable, Living Wage Career Pathways
Release Date: November 20, 2023

The Department of Commerce is seeking project proposals that identify and accelerate innovative, evidence-informed approaches to supporting un- and under-employed Philadelphians prepare for and connect to sustainable career pathways that pay a living wage.¹ Proposals must be able to be implemented and evaluated for impact over the calendar year.

Application Overview and Guidelines

Applicants must describe how they will intentionally identify, elevate, and address the specific challenges Black, brown, and other historically disadvantaged Philadelphia residents face when preparing for and entering the workforce.

Applicants can propose a **new program design** or the addition of one or more innovative, evidence-informed component(s) to **an existing workforce program**.

Innovations should be evidence-informed and can focus on any number of workforce program components, including but not limited to: Employer engagement in program design, job seeker recruitment, creative virtual training, barrier removal, job connection and retention, financial incentives for job seekers and/or employers, additional or adapted training curriculum, staff training and deployment, etc.

For this funding opportunity, “evidence-informed” is defined as using research, data, and best practice recommendations to structure the design and evaluation of new and innovative solutions to an existing or emerging workforce challenge. Evidence can include an applicant’s primary data from pilot programs run on a small scale.

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposed innovation(s) will lead to greater outcomes in one or more of the following areas:

- Connection to sustainable, living-wage employment (*highest priority*)
- Employer involvement in curriculum development/training
- Completion of job training
- Increased education and/or industry-recognized credentialing
- Development and demonstration of work readiness skills
- Development and demonstration of industry-specific skills
- Increased job retention and/or career pathway progression

Up to a total of \$1 million will be awarded to between two (2) and five (5) project proposals. Awards will range in size from \$200,000 to \$600,000 and proposed budgets will be reviewed carefully to ensure costs align to program design and projected impact.

¹ See APPENDIX A: Department of Commerce Mission and Recovery Strategy.

Priority consideration will be given to applicants that fulfill the City’s goals for inclusion of minority-, woman-, or disabled-owned businesses (M/W/DSBEs). The City of Philadelphia’s participation rate goal is 35 percent for minority-, woman-, or disability-owned businesses (M/W/DSBEs). Applicants are expected to consider this in their proposal regarding any contractors, subcontractors, and/or vendors required to implement their proposed initiative(s).

No more than 15 percent of the proposed budgets can be dedicated to administrative costs.

The Commerce Department’s Workforce Development Division will make final funding decisions based on recommendations from a review committee comprised of individuals representing multiple City departments, economic and workforce development institutions, philanthropy, and the local business community.

Preference points will be given to applicants who were funded within the past year and demonstrated exceptional performance with employer engagement strategy and job placement metrics.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include public, private, and non-profit organizations with the expertise and capacity to implement, evaluate, and report on the impact of their proposed innovation(s) over an eight-month period. Applicants must be financially stable, in compliance with all state and federal guidelines as a non-profit or for-profit organization, and in tax and regulatory compliance with the City of Philadelphia.

Timeline

Call for Ideas Released	November 20, 2023
Deadline to submit questions or requests for clarification, in writing to Talent.Development@Phila.gov	December 1, 2023
Responses to Q&A posted	December 6, 2023
Deadline to submit “Intent to Apply” to Talent.Development@Phila.gov <i>An MS word version of this document and all questions and answers will be sent upon receipt of the “Intent to Apply.”</i>	December 8, 2023 by 5pm
Deadline for Submitting Proposals to Talent.Development@Phila.gov	December 18, 2023 by 5pm
Announcement of Awards	January 19, 2024
Planning Period Begins	February 1, 2024

Narrative Components

Part 1: Summary of Proposed Evidence-Informed Innovation

Applicants must thoroughly describe the evidence-informed innovation(s) they are proposing to implement, including the intended impact. Proposed innovations must incorporate the following components:

Population of Job Seekers

Project proposals must engage Philadelphia job seekers who meet the following criteria:

- 18 years of age and older
- Limited education and/or workforce credentials
- Limited or no work experience
- Either:
 - Currently engaged in, or recently separated from, low-wage employment
 - Historically under/unemployed

Priority consideration will be given to proposals that focus recruitment on Black and brown residents, as well as other historically disadvantaged Philadelphians.

Jobs and Industries

Project proposals must prepare and provide participants the opportunity to compete for specific full-time (35 hours/week minimum) job opportunities that pay a minimum starting wage of \$15.71/hour.

Priority consideration will be given to proposals that connect participants to job opportunities meeting one or more of the following additional criteria:

- Growth Industries: Life Sciences, Skilled Trades, Public Sector.
- Pay a starting wage of \$15.71/hour or more, with a pathway to a living wage for a minimum of one working adult and one child ([see MIT living wage calculator](#)).
- Provide opportunities to advance along a career pathway.
- Are at low risk of elimination due to automation.
- Are projected to grow over the next 3 to 5 years.
- Offer paid sick time and access to employer paid health insurance.

Employer Engagement

Project proposals must describe the role employer partners will perform in informing curriculum development, program design, and implementation. Additionally, applicants will be required to submit Employer Commitment Forms (see APPENDIX C) from two or more employers outlining their commitment to considering, interviewing, and/or hiring program graduates for open positions. Commitment from employers must ensure that at least 80% of program participants that complete the program will be interviewed and there are open jobs readily available for them.

Part 2: Alignment to Quality Standards

Project proposals must demonstrate alignment to a minimum of three (3) of the *Workforce Professional Alliance (WPA)*'s standards of quality. ²Priority consideration will be given to proposals that align to four (4) or more standards. Quality Standards are as follows:

- **Ensures Fit:** An organization will utilize an intentional screening process that assesses the applicant's readiness based on motivation, skill set, and ability to persist to completion. Where a fit does not exist, the organization will maintain and leverage a strong referral network.

² The Workforce Professional Alliance (WPA) is a collaborative of high-impact organizations focused on developing and executing talent solutions for Philadelphia.

- Outcome-focused Design: An organization will maintain an outcome-focused design that is informed by evidence-based best practices and clearly articulates training goals and outcomes connected to gainful employment.
- Stakeholder-informed Curriculum: An organization will develop and maintain an industry and employer-informed curriculum that meets the needs of its participants and employer partners.
- Career-oriented Skills Development: An organization will ensure that participants connect to immediate job opportunities after training and complete the program with practical skills that increase their chances of employability in a stable, living-wage job.
- Ongoing Support for Mentoring and Training: An organization will create opportunities for practice with coaching and feedback that will occur during and after the completion of training.
- Built-in Feedback Mechanisms and Evaluation: An organization will embed assessment measures that incorporate feedback from all stakeholders, maintaining internal and external evaluation practices that create significant ROI for participants, employers, and funders.

Part 3: Commitment to Racial Equity

Applicants must articulate their organization’s commitment to racial equity, and specifically describe how racial equity will be defined, measured, and achieved through the proposed innovation(s).

Part 4: Description of Expected Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy

Applicants must clearly explain the rationale and expected impact of their proposed evidence-informed innovation(s). Specifically, proposals must describe how many job seekers will be engaged and how many will achieve the following outcomes:

- Connection to sustainable, living-wage employment (*highest priority*)
- Completion of job training
- Increased education and/or industry-recognized workforce credentialing
- Development and demonstration of work readiness skills
- Development and demonstration of industry-specific skills
- Increased job retention and/or career pathway progression

Applicants must describe the output and outcome metrics they will use to measure impact, including a description of how data will be collected, analyzed, and reported. Strong applicants will further quantify how much additional impact (e.g. individuals trained, placed, etc.) this funding will generate, versus their current scale of impact.

Part 5: Staff Qualifications

Applicants must provide the names, titles, and professional qualifications of all staff members essential to the design and delivery of the proposed innovation(s).

Part 6: Project Timeline

Applicants must provide a detailed project timeline that includes key activities and milestones between February 1, 2024 and January 30, 2025. The timeline should be inclusive of all activities required to achieve the intended impact.

Part 7: Cost Proposal

Applicants must provide a detailed cost proposal and completed Budget Template (see APPENDIX E). The budget must include all costs that will be charged to the Commerce Department for the proposed services required to complete the project, as well as a good faith estimate of leveraged funds required to achieve the proposal’s objectives, both secured and pending.

Submission Instructions

Proposal narratives (not to exceed 8 pages, single spaced, 12-point font) should be submitted as a single PDF document and include the required Cover Sheet (see APPENDIX C) and a minimum of two (2) Employer Commitment Forms (see APPENDIX D). Appendices do not count toward the page limit. The completed Budget Template (see APPENDIX E) should be submitted as a separate Microsoft Excel document.

Proposals must be submitted via email to Talent.Development@Phila.gov by December 18, 2023 by 5 pm. The subject line should read: Call for Ideas: [name of project idea] – submitted by [name of applicant organization].

APPENDIX A: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE VISION AND MISSION

VISION: We envision Philadelphia to be a more dynamic, diverse destination with a thriving economy that benefits all people who live and work in our city.

MISSION: The Department of Commerce is the economic catalyst for the City of Philadelphia helping all businesses thrive. Commerce creates equitable wealth building opportunities through strategic investments and ecosystem partnerships to grow quality jobs, build capacity in under-resourced communities, and make it easier to operate a successful business in Philadelphia.

Commerce's Workforce Development Division is immediately focused on connecting Philadelphia residents to careers in growth industries. This includes a focus on Philadelphians who lack a high school credential, as well as residents with limited digital proficiency, lack of foundational employability skills, and/or those in need of industry-recognized credentials. Across our portfolio of initiatives, the Workforce Development Division is committed to ensuring our work elevates, prioritizes, and serves the needs of Black and brown and other historically disadvantaged Philadelphia residents.

Barriers to Employment:

Residents face several barriers to employment, many of which disproportionately affect workers of color. Example factors include the level of educational attainment, the digital divide, the threat of automation, and more.

- **Educational Attainment:** At 35.7%, the poverty rate for adults with no high school diploma is 10 points higher than the Philadelphia-wide rate.³
 - Nationally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that employed people were more likely to hold an active certification or license (25%) than the unemployed (12.5%) or those who were not in the labor force (6%).⁴
- **Digital Divide:** Digital access is increasingly essential for education, health, employment, and more – yet it continues to be inequitable and inaccessible.
 - Within the Philadelphia MSA, adoption rates of broadband differ significantly; the adoption rate is 53% in predominantly Black neighborhoods, compared to 73% in predominantly white neighborhoods.⁵

³ Philadelphia's Poor: Experiences from Below the Poverty Line. Pew Research. September 2018.

⁴ Labor Force Statistics from Current Population Survey. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016.

⁵ Toward Digital Inclusion – Broadband Access in the Third Federal District. Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. March 2020.

- Further, according to a McKinsey Global Institute study, the need for foundational digital skills will grow by as much as 69% by 2030.⁶
- **Automation:** In Philadelphia, 22% of workers (~630K) are in jobs that have a high potential for automation⁷
 - The average worker is aged 16-29, a demographic that makes up 30% of the workforce.⁸
 - This further impacts workers of color – Black and Hispanic workers are most likely to be affected. 18.2% of occupations held by Black workers and 17.5% of occupations held by Hispanic workers are at a high risk of automation.⁹
 - Occupations with the greatest risk of automation include cashiers; hand laborers and movers; janitors and cleaners; stock clerks and order fillers; bookkeeping, accounting, auditing clerks; and wait staff.

In this context, employers and workforce development organizations have an opportunity to build an equitable path to recovery for all Philadelphia residents. For further resources, consider the [Economy League](#), the [Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia](#), [Philadelphia Works](#), and more.

⁶ Automation and the Workforce of the Future. McKinsey Global Institute. May 2018.

⁷ Respond, Restart, Recharge, Reimagine. City of Philadelphia. September 2020.

⁸ Respond, Restart, Recharge, Reimagine. City of Philadelphia. September 2020.

⁹ Automation and Regional Employment in the Third Federal Reserve District. Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. October 2018.

APPENDIX C: APPLICANT COVER SHEET

Date: _____

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Organization			
Mailing Address			
Website			
Minority-, Woman-, or Disabled-Owned or Led Organization		<i>(if yes, please indicate which)</i>	
Contact Person for the Application (name and title)			
Email		Phone	
Project Lead (name and title) (if different from grant contact)			
Email		Phone	

GRANT REQUEST INFORMATION

Project Title	
What is the total budget for the proposed project?	
How much are you requesting through this Call for Ideas?	

EMPLOYER PARTNER INFORMATION *(please add lines as needed)*

Employer Partner	Industry	Point of Contact	Position Title

APPENDIX D: EMPLOYER COMMITMENT FORM

EMPLOYER PARTNER INFORMATION

Employer*			
Mailing Address			
Industry			
Website			
Minority-, Woman-, or Disabled- Owned Business	<i>(if yes, please indicate which)</i>		
Total Number of Employees		Minimum Hourly Wage	
Contact Person for the Proposed Project (name and title)			
Email		Phone	

**Note, the Department of Commerce will not contact employers directly as part of the review process.*

TALENT NEEDS

Please describe your hiring needs over the next 12-18 months, including the number of projected openings that could be filled by graduates of the proposed program. How could the program help you meet those needs?

PROJECT SUPPORT

How will you support implementation of the proposed program? Please check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Inform training curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct mock interviews with program participants
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share information on company culture and expectations with program participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide career exposure opportunities to program participants
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please explain):		

INTERVIEW AND HIRING COMMITMENT

Are you committed to interviewing qualified program graduates for open positions?
YES or NO

Are you committed to hiring qualified program graduates for open positions?
YES or NO

Employer Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name and Title: _____

APPENDIX E: BUDGET TEMPLATE

Budget Template can be downloaded here: <https://tinyurl.com/CFI-Budget-Template>

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE SCORING RUBRIC

PROPOSAL SECTION	SCORE OUT OF 3
Project Understanding	
Understanding of, and Capacity to Meet, Project Goals	
Scope of Work	
Target Populations	
Alignment to WPA Standards of Quality	
Innovation(s)	
Identifies Employer Partnership(s)	
Work Readiness, Industry Training, & Credentials	
Connection to Quality Employment and Retention	
Evidence-Based Models	
Data-Informed Approach to Identifying Priority Industries and Career Fields	
Cost Proposal, Work Products and Timeline	
Cost Proposal	
Tangible Work Products and Timeline	
Statement of Qualifications and Relevant Experience	
Organizational Experience	
Commitment to Racial Equity	
Required Qualifications	
Goals for Inclusion of Minority or Women-Owned Businesses	
Preference Points	

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

CHECK	Application Component
Application Narrative	
	Part 1: Summary of Proposed Evidence-Informed Innovation
	Part 2: Alignment to Quality Standards
	Part 3: Commitment to Racial Equity
	Part 4: Description of Expected Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy
	Part 5: Staff Qualifications
	Part 6: Project Timeline
	Part 7: Cost Proposal
Appendices	
	Appendix C: Application Cover Sheet
	Appendix D: Employer Commitment Form (minimum of 2)
	Appendix E: Completed Budget Template