



CALL FOR IDEAS
Workforce Innovation Grants
Prepare for and Connect to Sustainable, Living Wage Career Pathways
Release Date: October 27, 2025

The City of Philadelphia 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. Proposals must be able to be implemented and evaluated for impact over the calendar year.

Within this Call for Ideas there are two main focus areas for which you can apply:

1. ***Skilled Trades/Construction Training***- Support pathways into union apprenticeships and sustainable construction careers through innovative training models, barrier removal, and strengthened pre-apprenticeship to apprenticeship connections.
2. ***Innovative Industry Responsive Programming***- Develop employer-engaged training or supportive programming across growing industries that respond to real-time workforce needs through innovative curriculum development, retention strategies, and career progression support.

Skilled Trades/Construction

Application Overview and Guidelines

Applicants must describe how they will intentionally identify, elevate, and address the specific challenges of 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: Job seeker recruitment, barrier removal, strengthening connections between pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships, job connection and retention, financial incentives for job seekers and/or employers.

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*)
- Strengthened pathway into union apprenticeships
- Supporting participants from zip codes identified in the [Geographic and Economic Hiring Preferences](#) (See Appendix E for more information)



- Increased education and/or industry-recognized credentialing
- Increased job retention and/or career pathway progression

Innovative Industry Responsive Programming

Application Overview and Guidelines

Applicants must describe how they will intentionally identify, elevate, and address the specific challenges of 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, barrier removal, job connection and retention, financial incentives for job seekers and/or employers, technical assistance or innovative partnership model with employers (ex. Working with employers to improve retention and internal mobility), staff training and deployment.

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 new design or 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
- Technical Assistance to support employers with growth and development of new pathways
- Completion of job training
- Increased education and/or industry-recognized credentialing
- Increased job retention and/or career pathway progression

The following applies to both focus areas:

Up to a total of \$3 million will be awarded with awards ranging in size from \$200,000 to \$600,000. Proposed budgets will be reviewed carefully to ensure costs align to program design and projected impact.

No more than **20 percent** of the proposed budgets can be dedicated to administrative costs. The Workforce Division will make final funding decisions based on recommendations from a review committee composed of individuals representing multiple City departments, economic and workforce development institutions, philanthropy, and the local business community.



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 a twelve-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	October 27, 2025
Deadline to submit questions or requests for clarification, in writing to Talent.Development@Phila.gov	November 17, 2025
Responses to Q&A posted	November 24, 2025
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 1, 2025 by 5pm
Deadline for Submitting Proposals to Talent.Development@Phila.gov	December 8, 2025 by 5pm
Announcement of Awards	January 26, 2026
Planning Period Begins	February 1, 2026

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

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 \$16.82/hour.

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

- Aligned to City of Philadelphia's investments and support of major construction developments such as H.O.M.E., Infrastructure, and other commercial, mixed use and/or residential.
- **Growth Industries** as identified by [Brookings SEPA Market Assessment](#): Biomedical commercialization, Enterprise digital solutions, Materials machining/fabrication.
- **In-Demand Jobs** as identified by [Philadelphia's High Priority Occupation List](#).
- **Demonstrated Growth** of industry/occupation over the next 12-36 months.
- Employer and Employee supports (barrier removal, technical assistance and incentives).
- A pathway to a "Good Job" (Jobs that pay family-sustaining wages (\$29.76) and offer employer-sponsored health insurance) as defined by the [Brookings report Southeastern Pennsylvania market assessment for growing opportunity industries and economic mobility](#).
- 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. Priority 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.
- **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: 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:

For Construction/Skilled Trades:

- Connection to sustainable, living-wage employment (*highest priority*)
- Strengthened pathway into union apprenticeships
- Supporting participants from zip codes identified in the [Geographic and Economic Hiring Preferences](#) (See Appendix E for more information)
- Increased education and/or industry-recognized credentialing
- Increased job retention and/or career pathway progression

For Innovative Industry Responsive Training:

- Connection to sustainable, living-wage employment (*highest priority*)
- Employer involvement in curriculum development/training
 - Technical Assistance to support employers with growth and development of new pathways
- Completion of job training
- Increased education and/or industry-recognized credentialing
- 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 4: 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 5: Project Timeline

Applicants must provide a detailed project timeline that includes key activities and milestones between February 1, 2026 and January 30, 2027. The timeline should be inclusive of all activities required to achieve the intended impact.

Part 6: Cost Proposal

Applicants must provide a detailed cost proposal and completed Budget Template (see APPENDIX C). 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 A) and a minimum of two (2)



Employer Commitment Forms (see APPENDIX B). Appendices do not count toward the page limit. The completed Budget Template (see APPENDIX C) should be submitted as a separate Microsoft Excel document.

Proposals must be submitted via email to Talent.Development@Phila.gov by December 8, 2025 by 5 pm. The subject line should read: Call for Ideas: [name of project idea] – submitted by [name of applicant organization].



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 B: 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.

☐	Inform training curriculum	☐	Conduct mock interviews with program participants
☐	Share information on company culture and expectations with program participants	☐	Provide career exposure opportunities to program participants
☐	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 C: BUDGET TEMPLATE

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

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE SCORING RUBRIC

PROPOSAL SECTION	SCORE OUT OF 3
Project Understanding	

Understanding of, and Capacity to Meet, Project Goals	
Scope of Work	
Alignment to WPA Standards of Quality	
Innovation(s)	
Identifies Employer Partnership(s)	
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	
Required Qualifications	

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

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

APPENDIX E: Geographic and Economic Hiring Preferences (GEHP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What are Geographic and Economic Hiring Preferences (GEHP)?

GEHP establishes goals for the hiring of apprentices and journeypersons residing in select zip codes. The implementation of hiring preferences is an effective strategy for expanding economic opportunities for all by connecting individuals to careers that offer family sustaining wages.

2. What is a GEHP Priority Zip Code?

A GEHP Priority Zip Code is any U.S. zip code where 56.5% or more of the population has incomes at or below 300% of the federal poverty level, in Philadelphia the Priority Zip codes are:

Priority Zip Codes in Philadelphia County

19104	19131	19139	19149
19120	19132	19140	19151
19121	19133	19141	19153
19122	19134	19142	
19124	19135	19143	
19126	19138	19144	

