

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 30-15
	DATE March 8, 2016

TO: AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
 DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
 STATE WORKFORCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY ACT LIAISONS AND ADMINISTRATORS
 STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WDB) CHAIRS
 LOCAL WDB CHAIRS
 STATE WDB EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS
 LOCAL WDB EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
 Assistant Secretary
 Employment and Training Administration

Subject: Release and Availability of a Report, *“Evaluation of the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge Grants: Interim Findings on Multiagency Collaboration and Cluster Progress”*

1. **Purpose.** To announce the release and availability of an interim report, *“Evaluation of the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge Grants: Interim Findings on Multiagency Collaboration and Cluster Progress,”* and to explain the context and background on multiagency collaboration for regional industry clusters; describe the goals and activities of the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge (JIAC) and Advanced Manufacturing – Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge (AM-JIAC) regional industry clusters; provide Federal perspectives on progress through the summer of 2014; summarize industry cluster reports including participant characteristics, services and workforce outcomes through June 2014; and share next steps for the study.
2. **References.**
 - H-1B Technical Skills Training funding for the Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge and the Advanced Manufacturing-Jobs Innovation Accelerator Challenge grants, Federal Funding Opportunities issued on May 20, 2011, and May 24, 2012.
 - Section 414(c) of the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998, as amended in 29 U.S.C. § 2916a.
3. **Background.** Starting in May 2011, the Administration launched four, multiagency initiatives to accelerate job creation and economic growth through both public and private partnerships. The initiatives include the JIAC, AM-JIAC, Rural JIAC, and Make-It-In-America grants. Eight funding partners provided both financial and technical resources for

these initiatives and another 15 Federal agencies offered technical assistance to support the grant awardees. Collectively across the four initiatives, 53 projects in 30 states received a total of \$86.5 million, the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA's) evaluation efforts are being conducted to learn more from two specific initiatives: JIAC and AM-JIAC, also called the Jobs Accelerator grants.

In August 2013, the ETA contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research to conduct a process evaluation of the Jobs Accelerator grants. These first two rounds of grants are funded by a total of five Federal agencies: the Department of Labor's ETA; the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA); the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA); the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP); and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Multi-agency grants were awarded to 20 JIAC clusters in 2011 and 10 AM-JIAC clusters in 2012. Both grant initiatives run through the fall of 2015.

When completed, this study will more thoroughly explore and examine the structures and processes created to support these regional cluster initiatives, including the: (1) roles of multiagency collaborations in regional clusters; (2) ways in which regional clusters, programs, and partnerships develop; (3) types of workforce-related outcomes achieved through these types of initiatives; (4) management structures and practices implemented to promote sustainability; and (5) lessons learned through implementation.

This interim report identifies the extent and nature of the Federal partner collaboration; provides an overview of the clusters and proposed activities; discusses the Federal perspective on progress; and summarizes preliminary participant data. The report also describes the selection criteria used to identify the clusters for the evaluation site visits proposed in 2015 and the data sources used to select the sites and complete the report.

4. Research Design and Analytical Approach. The primary sources of data for this evaluation include grant document reviews (grant applications and agreements, quarterly ETA performance reports, and integrated work plan progress reports); telephone interviews with Federal agency representatives; site visits to a subset of grantee clusters; and a survey of partner organizations. The process evaluation focuses on answering five key questions about the JIAC and AM-JIAC initiatives:

- What is the role of multiagency collaboration in the planning and implementation of cluster activities?
- How and in what ways do regional clusters, programs, and partnerships develop under the grant?
- What workforce-related outcomes did the clusters report achieving through this initiative?
- How is the initiative managed within each cluster? What practices are being implemented to promote sustainability of grant resources, partnerships, and activities?
- What are key lessons learned through implementation? How and under what circumstances might these lessons be replicated?

5. **Interim Report Findings.** The early implementation findings of the JIAC and AM-JIAC study describe the innovative, multiagency approaches developed to accelerate job creation and economic growth through both public and private sector partnerships. The interim report delves into grant management activities, goals and some outcomes; Federal partner perspectives and technical assistance activities; JIAC and AM-JIAC cluster goals and proposed activities; and grantee performance and progress reports. Among the early findings, the interim report highlights are:

- Multiagency collaboration roles were viewed as distinctive among the number of Federal partners involved. While the Federal funding opportunities (FFO) were unique and challenging, Federal staff respondents viewed the FFO development as successful collaborative efforts.
- Regional industry clusters included a range of multiple county initiatives across urban, suburban and rural areas. While the AM-JIAC grants exclusively focused on advanced manufacturing, the JIAC grants included common industry sectors such as renewable energy and information technology.
- Federal agency perceptions from interviews conducted midway through the ETA grantees' periods of performance indicated that many of the regional clusters were making progress toward cluster, partner and other agency goals. Given the individual agencies' staggered performance periods, by design many EDA, SBA, NIST MEP, and DOE activities were completed or in the final phases by the summer of 2014. ETA-funded grants were expected to continue beyond the fall of 2015.
- ETA-funded education and training activities, including supportive services, were available for eligible jobseekers through JIAC grants and the public workforce system. As of June 30, 2014, both the JIAC and AM-JIAC grant projects had served slightly more than 3,500 participants. Of those participants enrolled in grant activities, more than 99 percent in JIAC clusters and more than 93 percent in AM-JIAC clusters participated in education and training activities; classroom occupational training accounted for the largest set of training activities.

The interim report analysis is descriptive, and results do not support causal relationships. Other limitations are described in the report. The preliminary analysis and early findings will inform the next steps and final report of this evaluation.

6. **Inquiries.** To view an abstract of this publication, as well as download the full report, visit the ETA Research Publication Database Website at:
<http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.