

Workforce System Technical Assistance Collaborative
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
October 1, 2021

1. What is the timeline for the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)?

The closing date for receipt of applications under this Announcement is **November 8, 2021**. We must receive applications no later than 4:00:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

2. What is the purpose of the Workforce System Technical Assistance Collaborative?

The purpose of this cooperative agreement solicitation is to establish one (or possibly more based on an applicant's program design) Technical Assistance (TA) Collaborative to provide effective and efficient delivery of technical assistance to the public workforce system in order to promote the continuous improvement of services and outcomes provided to job seekers and employers. The desired result of the TA Collaborative is to establish a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving services and outcomes of the public workforce system.

3. Who is eligible to apply for this grant?

Eligible applicants must be organizations that possess the internal capacity, external relationships, and expertise in workforce development that will enable them to deliver TA services on a national, system-wide scale to the public workforce system. The following entities are eligible to apply:

- a) non-profit organizations and for-profit businesses;
- b) educational institutions, including community colleges, universities, and research institutions;
- c) labor organizations or trade unions; or
- d) state governments and state workforce development boards, or private institutes or independent policy research organizations.

4. Who are the required partners for the Workforce System Technical Assistance Collaborative?

Applicants are encouraged but not required to form partnerships with other entities. An applicant must have the expertise (particularly within the publicly-funded workforce development arena), resources, and capacity (number of personnel, subject matter experts) to deliver comprehensive workforce system TA on a nationwide basis. DOL anticipates that most eligible entities will not singularly possess the expertise or capacity to operate the project unassisted and will need to engage partners. As such, the lead applicant's implementation plan must include a description of the associated partners, if engaged, to supplement program activities to fully address and execute all of the required grant funded activities and deliverables. Those applicants proposing partnerships must describe the roles and expected contributions of the partners and documentation that include Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) or Letters of Commitment.

Examples of potential partnerships could include (but are not limited to):

1. Lead applicant is a national non-profit focused on improving employment opportunities for low income youth and adults. Lead applicant establishes a partnership with another non-profit that has expertise in development of career pathways models in multiple states. The application may reflect the expertise of both organizations that fulfill the application requirements and document the partnership arrangement.
2. Lead applicant is a University-based research center specializing in workforce development issues and identification of effective workforce practices. Lead applicant establishes a partnership with a for-profit marketing and communications firm experienced in translating human services research into practical materials for practitioners.

5. Can we include additional partners?

Yes, applicants may include multiple partners with relevant expertise and capacity to operate the project. The lead applicant's implementation plan must include a description of the associated partners, if engaged, to supplement program activities to fully address and execute all of the required grant funded activities and deliverables.

6. Can I apply as a lead applicant for more than one grant?

We will consider only one application from each organization as a lead applicant. If we receive multiple applications from the same organization serving as a lead applicant, we will consider only the most recently received application that met the deadline. If the most recent application is disqualified for any reason, we will not replace it with an earlier application.

Organizations may be involved as partners on multiple applications.

7. How is the TA Collaborative funded?

The Workforce System Technical Assistance Collaborative is authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Dislocated Worker National Reserve funding for technical assistance (TA) and Title I of the Department of Labor Appropriations Act, 2021.

8. What amount of funding is available? Is there a limit?

We expect availability of approximately \$3-3.5 million to make at least one award. DOL may award a second cooperative agreement if additional funding becomes available. DOL reserves the option to make more than one award under this FOA, particularly if additional funding becomes available.

9. How long is the grant period of performance?

This cooperative agreement will establish and operate a Workforce System Technical Assistance (TA) Collaborative over a 3-year (36-month) period of performance from an anticipated start date of February 2022.

10. What is the geographic scope for these grant projects?

The TA Collaborative will focus on providing technical assistance on a national scale. The Collaborative will primarily engage the workforce system and its partners through a virtual platform/online presence.

11. What types of activities will this grant fund?

The TA Collaborative funded under a cooperative agreement must, at a minimum:

- Develop comprehensive TA strategies system-wide, intended to increase the workforce system's efficacy, performance, and efficiency, as well as customized strategies for specific states and localities;
- Provide technical assistance to individual WIOA Title I and Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service grantees experiencing an acute challenge, identifying such grantees needs in consultation with ETA;
- Use ETA's platforms to create an online community to support key stakeholders and customers during the life of the project, which can be sustained by the Department after the project ends;
- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning;
- Develop summaries of best practices, profiles or toolkits of how grantees can implement evidence-based practices, and written resources to provide assistance;
- Assist the public workforce system in conducting participant and employer outreach, implementation, and partnership building.
- Coordinate with ETA through a TA steering committee to leverage, align, and build on existing TA efforts already in place to maximize the use of resources and minimize the duplication of efforts. The Collaborative must ensure, at ETA's direction, engagement with ETA-funded TA contractors to support these efforts; and
- Coordinate across all TA Collaboratives to serve the public workforce system, provided ETA awards more than one cooperative agreement.

12. How does this grant differ from ETA's typical training grants?

Unlike ETA's grants to organizations to provide employment and training services to individuals, this cooperative agreement provides an opportunity for coordinating with ETA on developing and delivering technical assistance to the workforce system. This cooperative agreement is more similar to our capacity building grants with a focus on enhancing the employment and training services our grantees provide and helping to ensure grantees are successful in achieving their outcomes.

13. Is there a match funds requirement for these grant projects?

Match Funding: This grant program does not require cost sharing or matching funds.

14. What are expected outcomes and outputs of the grant program?

DOL expects delivery of relevant, high quality technical assistance to the public workforce development system, and demonstration of that result via measurable or tangible improvements (i.e., increased adoption of a compliant behavior, increased adoption of a specific evidence-based practice, process efficiency; increased performance outcomes).

Therefore, applicants' technical assistance approaches must include methods for measuring and assessing behavioral changes resulting from the technical assistance.

Applicants will be scored based on the extent to which their approach for assessing and addressing TA needs reflects proven or evidence-based activities that will deliver sustainable results for those receiving the technical assistance. To receive full points, applicants must:

- Include a comprehensive TA logic model that reflects the applicant's overall approach to TA in a visual format, using one example of a specific TA intervention of the applicants' choosing. The TA Model must provide a description of the drivers, activities, inputs and outputs, and the outcomes/success factors. The applicant must describe how it will use logic models throughout the project period;
- Provide a thorough description of comprehensive measures, methods, techniques, and tools that will be used to evaluate technical assistance effectiveness and effectively determine whether or not the activities achieved their anticipated outcomes; and
- Clearly explain a feasible and workable strategy to use data to inform technical assistance delivery and document lessons learned, both positive and negative.

15. How will past performance be evaluated?

Applicants must demonstrate their track record of providing innovative and successful technical assistance to workforce system stakeholders, including: (1) demonstrated large scale technical assistance to the workforce system, (2) capacity to implement innovative ideas, and (3) capacity to effectively manage the programmatic, fiscal, and administrative aspects of the proposed project. The relevant experience must have occurred within the last seven years.

16. How will applications be evaluated for funding?

We have instituted procedures for assessing the technical merit of applications to provide for an objective review of the applications and to assist you in understanding the standards against which your application will be judged. The evaluation criteria are based on the information required in the application as described in Sections IV.B.2 (Project Budget) and IV.B.3. (Project Narrative). Reviewers will award points based on the evaluation criteria as shown in the following chart. See the FOA for the full description of each criterion.

A technical merit review panel will carefully evaluate applications against the selection criteria to determine the merit of applications. These criteria are based on the policy goals, priorities, and emphases set forth in this FOA. Up to 100 points may be awarded to an applicant, depending on the quality of the responses provided. The final scores (which may include the mathematical normalization of review panels) will serve as the primary basis for selection of applications for funding. The panel results are advisory in nature and not binding on the Grant Officer. The Grant Officer reserves the right to make selections based solely on the final scores or to take into consideration other relevant factors when applicable. Such factors may include the geographic distribution of funds, and other relevant factors. The Grant Officer may consider any information that comes to their attention.

Criterion	Points (maximum)
1. Project Design: Proposed Approach and TA Activities <u>(See Section IV.B.3.a)</u>	30
2. Outcomes, Outputs, and Evaluation of TA Effectiveness <u>(See Section IV.B.3.b)</u>	20
3. Project Work Plan <u>(See Section IV.B.3.c)</u>	10
4. Organizational Capability/Capacity and Qualifications of Key Personnel <u>(See Section IV.B.3.d)</u>	20
5. Past Performance – Programmatic Capability <u>(See Section IV.B.3.e)</u>	15
6. Budget and Budget Justification <u>(See Section IV.B.3.f)</u>	5
TOTAL	100