H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration
Revised November 9, 2020

1. What is the timeline of the Funding Opportunity Announcement?

The closing date for receipt of applications under this Announcement is **November 13, 2020**. We must receive applications no later than **4:00:00 p.m. Eastern Time**.

2. What is the H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program's purpose?

This Announcement solicits applications for the H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program. The recent COVID-19 crisis has placed an unprecedented strain on our nation's healthcare system. Rural areas in particular have struggled with providing needed healthcare services to their communities. The purpose of the **H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program** is: 1) increase the number of individuals training in healthcare occupations that directly impact patient care; and 2) alleviate healthcare workforce shortages by creating sustainable employment and training programs in healthcare occupations (including behavioral and mental healthcare) serving rural populations.

3. Who is eligible to apply for this grant?

The following organizations are eligible to apply as a lead applicant:
- Healthcare employers, and healthcare industry and/or occupation associations;
- Nonprofit healthcare organizations affiliated with hospitals and other medical facilities;
- Organizations designated as "Primary Care Associations" by Health Resources and Service Administration;
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State and Local Workforce Development Boards, under Sections 101 and 107 of WIOA;
- Indian/Native American Tribal Government (federally recognized); and
- Native American Program entities eligible for funding under Section 166 of WIOA.

4. Who are the required partners for the H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program?

The Department of Labor (DOL) will award grants to an H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Partnership of public and private sector entities. All applicants must include the following entities in their partnership:
- A minimum of two employer partners who are committed to hiring individuals trained through the grant; or an industry/trade association or other business association, such

as a Chamber of Commerce, that represents at least two employers who are committed to hiring individuals trained through the grant;

- One or more public or nonprofit education and training providers, including institutions of higher education as defined in Section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, community and technical colleges and systems; joint labor-management training partnerships; nonprofit and community-based organizations that offer job training, including those organizations that have been approved as WIOA Eligible Training Providers; and
- Entities involved in administering the workforce development system established under WIOA, including State and Local Workforce Development Boards and Native American Program entities eligible for funding under WIOA.
- Note: For applicants proposing to provide Registered Apprenticeship Programs or Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs in service areas whose states are federally recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs), the SAA must also be included as a partner.

5. Can we include additional partners?

Yes, applicants are strongly encouraged to collaborate with other optional partners that can support and advance the work of the H-1B Rural Healthcare Partnership.

Optional partners may include:

- Organizations functioning as workforce and industry intermediaries (including entities such as labor-management organizations, community-based organizations, and industry associations, which help broker local, regional, and national workforce solutions);
- Nonprofit organizations specializing in serving rural populations or populations with mental and behavioral health needs;
- State agencies with the responsibility for public health (including behavioral and mental healthcare and addiction services);
- Other organizations to support outreach and training activities, such as American Job Center operators;
- Community organizations that provide social support and/or wrap-around services;
- Foundations and philanthropic organizations; and
- Other federally funded programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other WIOA Title II Adult Education programs.

Applicants that are proposing to develop new rural healthcare programs are strongly encouraged to partner with professional associations, industry groups, and academic institutions that can support employment and training activities through the grant and provide quality assurance.

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 this grant program funded?

The H-1B Rural Healthcare Grant Program is authorized under Section 414(c) of the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 (ACWIA), as amended (codified at 29 U.S.C. 3224a). These grants are financed by a user fee paid by employers to bring foreign workers into the United States under the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program.

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

We expect availability of approximately $40 million to fund approximately 15 to 40 grants. Grant awards will range from $500,000 to $2,500,000. Applicants must propose to train a specific number of participants based on the size of the award requested and geographic area considerations, such as the population of the proposed service area or the number of healthcare employers in the service area.

9. How long is the grant period of performance?

The period of performance is 48 months. This performance period includes all necessary implementation and start-up activities. These activities include promoting rural healthcare programs within the targeted service area, developing or expanding training activities for individuals, providing training to participants, and undertaking follow-up for tracking and reporting performance outcomes. We expect that hiring appropriate grant project personnel and undertaking start-up activities will begin immediately and that grantees will begin enrolling participants no later than nine months after the date of grant award. We strongly encourage applicants to develop their project work plans and timelines accordingly. Grantees must plan to expend all of grant funds by the end of the period of performance.

10. Who can be served through this grant program?

This program will train individuals whose employment status when determined eligible for the program is unemployed, underemployed, or an incumbent worker as defined in the FOA.

All participants must be 17 years of age or older and not currently enrolled in secondary school within a local educational agency. Training must result in advancement of an individual's skills along a career pathway into middle- and high-skilled healthcare occupations.

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

The geographic scope is the physical service area in which awarded applicants will serve rural populations defined as those that: (1) meet the criteria defined by the HRSA's FORHP at https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/about-us/definition/index.html; or (2) any federally recognized Indian tribe.

Applicants can propose to serve rural areas at the local/regional or statewide level with healthcare training (including behavioral and mental healthcare occupations).
- Local/regional means serving a rural part of one state or a contiguous area that includes multiple rural sites in an economic region that do not cross state boundaries.
- Statewide means serving an entire state or multiple non-contiguous sites within one state. A statewide approach must encompass and emphasize services to rural areas.

Additional points are awarded to those projects with services areas located in Opportunity Zones. Applicants that demonstrate, in their abstract, that at least one census tract within their physical service area is a qualified Opportunity Zone will receive two points toward their overall application score. Applicants will not receive additional points for multiple Opportunity Zones within the proposed physical service area.

For more information on Opportunity Zones, go to: https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones-frequently-asked-questions.

12. Does this grant program restrict training and employment services only to rural populations?

While this FOA aims to address workforce shortages in rural areas, the FOA does not restrict the provision of grant-funded training and employment services only to eligible participants living in the rural service area proposed in the geographic scope. However, participant training must support the intent of the FOA, which is to alleviate healthcare workforce shortages by creating sustainable employment and training programs in healthcare occupations (including behavioral and mental healthcare) serving rural populations. Eligible target populations are described in the FOA Section III. C. 3. Eligible Participants.

13. Which industries will be targeted through these grant projects?

Applicants must design grant programs to help participants access a viable healthcare career pathway through education and training that results in employment in middle- and high-skilled jobs.

- This grant program is designed to support healthcare programs that focus on direct patient care; therefore, occupations such as healthcare-related Information Technology training will not be allowable under the FOA.
- Applicants must address the healthcare occupations specified in the FOA, and/or adequately demonstrate in-demand healthcare occupation(s) in the service area proposed through labor market information and/or other supporting documentation.

14. What types of activities will this grant program fund?

This grant program allows applicants to design or customize training models that meet the needs of healthcare employers and training participants in rural areas. Applicants must design workforce development strategies that support:

- Engaging healthcare providers and employers in the adoption and deployment of employment and training services to address specific healthcare needs in rural areas;
- Establishing new or expanding existing career pathways in the healthcare sector that focus on the skills, competencies, and credentials needed for middle to high-skilled direct patient healthcare occupations;
- Offering high quality training options (such as work-based learning training models) to prepare individuals to successfully move into middle- to high-skilled employment in healthcare occupations;
- Creating an infrastructure to successfully sustain the program components after the life of the grant;
- Providing supportive services to participants necessary to ensure they are able to participate fully in employment and training activities; and
- Identifying an existing system through the partnership with the local workforce development board or other WIOA partners for the purpose of collecting and reviewing program data, and monitoring results to assess program performance.

Projects funded under this FOA will provide a range of training and education services such as assessment, coaching and counseling, and occupational skills training models that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials. This may include robust, comprehensive, and customized work-based learning strategies such as On-the-Job Training (OJT); customized training for cohorts; Incumbent Worker Training; Registered Apprenticeship Programs; Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs; pre-apprenticeship programs that lead to grant-

funded apprenticeship programs; and paid work and paid internships, classroom training, and technology-based training strategies.

15. Is there a match or leveraged funds requirement for these grant projects?

No, this grant program does not require cost sharing or matching funds.

The Department does encourage applicants to generate at least 15 percent of the total amount of requested funds as leveraged funds to support the grant project. Leveraged resources are all resources, both cash and in-kind, in excess of this award. Applicants are encouraged to leverage resources to increase stakeholder investment in the project and broaden the impact of the project itself. By engaging partners and aligning grant projects with broader workforce activities, applicants will position their projects to sustain efforts beyond the grant period of performance.

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

For the purposes of performance reporting, applicants must provide target numbers for five H-1B outcome measures. Applicants will track these outcome measures and report to the Department throughout the grant using DOL's Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). The targets must be provided for each year of the grant, as well as for the total grant period.

The outcome measures include:
1. Total participants enrolled in education/training activities;
2. Total participants who complete education/training activities;
3. Total participants who complete education/training activities and receive a degree, or other type of credential;
4. Total number of unemployed and underemployed participants who complete education/training activities and obtain employment; and
5. Total number of incumbent worker participants who complete training activities and advance into a new position.

Please note: *Applicants are also required to provide annual and cumulative targets for the total number of participants served; however, this data will not be treated as a performance outcome measure.*

Applicants will also provide four-year outcome targets for the grant period and track two key WIOA outcomes:
1. "Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit;" and
2. "Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit."

17. How will past performance be evaluated?

Section IV.B.3.e of the FOA provides full information on providing data on past performance – programmatic capability.

Organizations will receive points based on past performance data. Applicants must provide the applicable past performance information:

1. Full description of the lead applicant's prior experience in the development of employment and training programs, or capacity to establish or expand employment and training programs within a rural local/regional or statewide area during the grant period. This could include evidence of existing partnerships, prior experience in taking employment and training programs to scale, and the number of participants served in prior programs;

2. Demonstration that partners have experience in deploying employment and training programs; including classroom training, work-based learning programs, internships, mentorships, externships, or clinical placements within the proposed industry; and in enrolling participants in employment and training programs, including securing employment placements, and/or wage increases; and

3. Documentation of Past Performance. Applicants must provide past performance data for outcomes achieved in past grant initiatives.

All applicants must complete a Past Performance Chart that includes the overall objectives of the grant, population served, funding amount, and grantor contact information.

Applicants should provide performance indicators most similar to the following:
1. Total participants enrolled in education/training activities;
2. Total participants who complete education/training activities;
3. Total participants who complete education/training activities and receive a degree, or other type of credential;
4. Total number of unemployed and underemployed participants who complete education/training activities and obtain employment; and
5. Total number of incumbent worker participants who complete training activities and advance into a new position.

18. 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 this chart. See the FOA for the full description of each criterion.

Criterion	Points (maximum)
1. Statement of Need (See Section IV.B.3.a. Statement of Need)	10
2. Expected Outcomes, and Outputs (See Section IV.B.3.b. Expected Outcomes and Outputs)	26
3. Project Design (See Section IV.B.3.c. Project Design)	24
4. Organizational, Administrative, and Fiscal Capacity (See Section IV.B.3.d Organizational, Administrative, and Fiscal Capacity)	8
5. Past Performance – Programmatic Capability (See Section IV.B.3.e. Past Performance – Programmatic Capability)	30
6. Budget and Budget Justification (See Section IV.B.2. Project Budget)	2
7. Bonus Points – Opportunity Zones (See Section IV.B.3. Priority Considerations)	2
TOTAL	102

19. The FOA requires grantees to make information about credentials and competencies developed and delivered using grant funds publicly accessible in a "linked open data format," and refers to "credential transparency description language (CTDL)." Can you explain what that means and what we will have to do if we are awarded a grant? Also, does this have to be reflected in our application?

Regarding the requirement to make grant-funded credentials and competencies publicly accessible, Section I.E.1. Training and Education Services of the FOA (p. 15) states:

"The Department wishes to ensure that individuals, employers, educators and training providers have access to the most complete, current and beneficial information about providers, programs credentials and competencies supported with these public, federal funds. To this end, the Department requires that information about all credentials (including but not limited to diplomas, badges, certificates, certifications, apprenticeships, licenses, and degrees of all levels and types) and competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) developed or delivered through the use of these public federal funds be made publicly accessible through the

use of linked open data formats that support full transparency and interoperability, such as through the use of credential transparency description language specifications. ETA will provide specific guidance and technical assistance on data elements to include in the published open data, such as information about the credential provider, the credential and its associated competencies, delivery mode, geographic coverage, the industry sector(s) and occupation(s) for which the credential was developed, related assessments, related accreditations or other quality assurances where appropriate, costs, and available outcomes."

To meet this requirement during the period of performance, grantees will need to describe grant-funded credentials using common structured, linked data formats, and to post this information in a publicly accessible location online. Grantees may need to seek assistance from a specialist in credential and data transparency in their Rural Healthcare Grant Partnership or an outside expert to comply with this requirement. The Department recommends that applicants reflect their proposed efforts to meet this requirement in their work plans and budgets. Below we provide information and resources on credential transparency to help applicants better understand the grant requirement. Note that successful applicants will receive further information and additional technical assistance from DOL on this requirement. Structured data is machine-readable and used by search engines to understand the content of web pages. Linked Data is a type of structured data that links between systems via the Web. When data is both structured and linked, it becomes a powerful tool that search engines and other systems can leverage.

For further information, you may wish to view the credential transparency slides located at https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-grants/h1-b-skills-training that provide more background on credential transparency. You may also wish to view resources from the following examples of open data formats for credentials:
- Comprehensive Learner Record Specification
- Credential Engine's Services and Publishing
- Open Badge 2.0 Specification
- W3C Verifiable Credentials Data Model

NEW 20. I am an applicant that has completed an H-1B-funded grant award within the past five years. The Quarterly Performance Report used for that grant was the ETA-9172 and not the ETA-9136. Should I use the data from the ETA-9172?

Yes. Applicants that used the ETA-9172 on their H-1B-funded grant within the past five years should use data from that form.